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Birkbeck, University of London

Italian Futurism and the Development of English Literary Modernism, 1909–1915

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

Declaration

I, Robyn Jakeman, declare that this thesis is my own work. Where I have drawn upon the work of other researchers, this has been fully acknowledged.

Abstract

This thesis considers the role of Italian Futurism in the development of English literary modernism between 1909 and 1915. It maps a set of complex and heterogeneous responses to the movement, involving both rejection and appropriation, in which attempts to experiment with English literature are undertaken in a bid to become 'modern'. I argue that Futurism represented for many English modernists a profoundly relevant approach to a social and cultural crisis that had emerged in the late nineteenth century. In this sense, Futurism was less a movement to be officially joined than a methodology that was appropriated in order to subvert and develop *fin-de-siècle* cultural discourses.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one addresses Futurism's inception in the internationalised space of cultural production of Europe before the First World War, and the movement's emergence in England. It suggests that Futurism was frequently understood as a means of transforming social discourses of decline, cultural discourses of Decadence, and the relationship between art and the public. The second chapter explores Harold Monroe's interactions with F. T. Marinetti and his publication of Futurist poetry in *Poetry and Drama*, and considers how Monroe transmitted Futurism to an English readership to suggest ways of developing Decadent and Symbolist poetry. Chapter three examines Wyndham Lewis's use of Futurist strategies in Vorticism to negotiate the Aestheticist divide between art and life, but also shows how tensions between the two movements continue to manifest in *Blast*. The fourth chapter considers Mina Loy's writings in the context of Futurist discourses and New Woman debates in Florence, demonstrating how she appropriated Futurist methods to inform her feminist thought and disrupt the basis on which

gendered difference is predicated. I conclude the thesis by considering the implications of my work for the field of modernist studies.

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Introduction

Erupting on to the European cultural scene on the front page of the Parisian daily newspaper *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909, Futurism announced a new literary and artistic programme that celebrated modernity in all its guises.¹ The ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’, devised and disseminated by the movement’s founder and impresario F. T. Marinetti (1876–1944), narrated the story of its author’s car crash and metaphorical rebirth, followed by a catalogue of hyperbolic statements intended to demonstrate Futurism’s commitment to the innovative and rebellious but also destructive powers of modernity. It claimed to address itself not to the intellectual elite, but to the modern phenomenon of the crowd — the ‘great masses shaken with work, pleasure, or rebellion’ — and demanded the demolition of ‘museums, libraries, [and] academies’: institutions that encouraged the worship of the past rather than stimulating a love for the future.² Most controversially, the movement called for the glorification and aesthetic appreciation of war as the ‘only hygiene of the world’, as well as ‘militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, beautiful ideas that kill, and contempt for woman’.³ While it is perhaps something of a commonplace to begin a study of Futurism with a brief summary of its founding gesture, no other document has encapsulated so successfully the aims and objectives, as well as the inherent tensions and contradictions of the movement. Futurism was presented as a fundamental break with the past, existing in an atemporal sphere, yet the first manifesto is filled with references to the past and present. It claimed to address the

¹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Le Futurisme’, *Le Figaro*, 20 February 1909, p. 1.

² F. T. Marinetti, ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ [1909], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 49–53 (p. 51).

³ Ibid.

masses but was publicised in a famously literary newspaper. And, perhaps most significantly, while the manifesto's emphasis is placed on a specifically Italian national renewal, it speaks to — or rather, shouts at — an international cultural community.

The international manifestations of Futurism, specifically its manifestations in English literature, are the focus of this thesis. Although much attention has been devoted to this subject, the movement has essentially been portrayed in modernist criticism as an unwelcome invasion, a movement that had no influence, or was, quite simply, ineffective. For Paul Peppis, Futurism's 'effect on [English] literature remained virtually non-existent, and when it did have an effect on actual writing it did so only in the wake of its unquestionable influence in forming a visual avant-garde in England', and while Cubo-Futurism was strongly evident in painting, there 'was no equivalent assimilation of Futurism in writing'.⁴ If Futurism is studied in relation to literary modernism then it is largely considered in terms of its fascination with modernity, its identification with the machine, and its obsession with speed. It also tends to focus predominantly on the ultra-male strands of modernism — the 'men of 1914' as Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) later referred to himself, Ezra Pound (1885–1972), T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), and James Joyce (1882–1941).⁵ As a result, English responses have often been understood to be unambiguously hostile to Futurism: Lawrence Rainey, for example, refers to Imagism as the 'first anti-avant-garde', while Martin Puchner brands Lewis and Vorticism as the 'rear-garde', adopting a 'defensive' stance within a nascent avant-garde culture.⁶

⁴ Paul Peppis, 'Futurism, Literature, and the Market', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. by Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 132–51 (p. 142).

⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* [1937] (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p. 252.

⁶ Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 30; Martin Puchner, 'The Aftershocks of *Blast*: Manifestos, Satire, and the

A focus on Futurism's fetishisation of technological modernity and the aesthetics of speed, which is perhaps to say the more superficial aspects of the movement's programme, has been largely ineffectual for a complete understanding of Futurism's influence on English literature. It is arguably more productive to consider the much broader cultural agenda of Futurism, which was to effect a restructuring of the universe by instituting a radical transformation of the relationship between art and life. This reconstruction was, however, largely to be achieved through a denial of history and the past. Writing in the Florentine Futurist journal *Lacerba* (1913–1915) in 1913, the artist Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) noted that '[we] deny the past because we want to forget, and in art to forget means to renew'.⁷ For Futurist practitioners, the desire to 'forget' was first and foremost the result of their need to liberate Italy from the weight of its cultural and political past, and to stimulate a regeneration of Italian society that was to be achieved through the nationally unifying force of war. Nevertheless, the movement attempted to dramatise a complete overturning of attitudes towards art in the late nineteenth century, which had isolated art in a distinct, autonomous sphere that was removed from life. Marinetti conceived Futurism as 'an impassioned attempt at introducing life into art': life was to be recast as a fundamental component of art, thereby transforming art's essential relationship with society and politics, and recalibrating art as a form of revolutionary expression and action.⁸ According to the Futurist scholar Günter Berghaus, 'Futurism sought to bridge the gap between art and life and to bring aesthetic innovation into the real

Rear-Guard of Modernism', in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. by Rebecca L. Walkowitz and Douglas Mao (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 44–67 (p. 45).

⁷ Umberto Boccioni, 'The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting' [1913], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 139–42 (p. 140).

⁸ F. T. Marinetti, 'In This Futurist Year' [1914], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Günter Berghaus, trans. by Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), pp. 231–37 (p. 233).

world. Life was to be changed through art, and art was to become a form of life'.⁹ This intention to reconcile art and the praxis of life through a rejection of autonomy as the defining characteristic of art does, however, underscore the ties that Futurism maintains with the past, for despite its repudiation of Decadent Aestheticism, the movement must be understood to form a sustained response to the anxieties surrounding the role of artist and the function of the work of art that originated in the late nineteenth century. Speaking on the Futurist *serate* [evening performances] in 1915, Marinetti argued that Futurist action-art enacted 'the violent incursion of life into art. Artists, alive at last, and no longer up in their ivory towers, despising aestheticism, asking to participate [...] in the progress of the world'.¹⁰ Formulating Futurism in this way, the movement is an attempt to posit an answer to the problem of the isolated condition of artist and the autonomous status of the work of art in Decadence and Aestheticism.

For English writers, the impulse to sever ties in an absolute sense with the past was never felt as keenly as it was for the Italian Futurists. This was essentially a result of the very different historical processes of the two countries, for while England was an established nation that had been home to the Industrial Revolution and was one of the world's foremost industrial powers, Italy was a relatively recently unified country that had experienced a belated start to 'modernity' in comparison with the rest of Western Europe. Nevertheless, it is the contention of this thesis that Futurism represented for many English modernist figures a profoundly relevant approach to a social and cultural crisis that had emerged in the late nineteenth century, and which was the subject of intense, ongoing debate in England at the beginning of the

⁹ Günter Berghaus, 'Introduction: F. T. Marinetti (1876–1944): A Life Between Art and Politics', in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. xvii–xxix (p. xix).

¹⁰ F. T. Marinetti, 'On the Subject of Futurism: An Interview with *La diana*' [1915], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 143–47 (pp. 143–44).

twentieth century. Focusing on three key figures of English modernism — Harold Monroe (1879–1932), Wyndham Lewis, and Mina Loy (1882–1966) — the thesis maps a diverse range of responses to Futurism’s interventions in the relationship between art and life. Attending to Monroe’s activities as an editor and publisher in pre-war London allows for an analysis of his fascination with Futurism’s relationship to a mass reading public, as well as their use of oral performances. Exploring Lewis’s writings on art demonstrates that his engagement with Futurism emerges from a desire to subvert Aestheticist discourses that remained present in 1914. My work on Loy produces a fuller account of her appropriation of Futurist discourses and techniques, focusing on her use of the movement’s ideology and strategies to inform and develop her gender politics. These writers were never to align themselves with Marinetti’s movement without question: they frequently denounced, antagonised, and even ridiculed the Futurists in their poetic, journalistic, and autobiographical writings. Futurist nationalism also posed a significant obstacle to any uncomplicated affiliation with the movement. Nevertheless, by exploring the multifaceted nature of English engagements with Futurism, I hope to demonstrate how English writers reshaped and redefined avant-garde practices, leading to developments in modernist literature. In doing so, this thesis produces a more nuanced account of the permeability of the boundaries between Italian Futurism and English modernism.

The period under consideration in this thesis, from 1909 to 1915, is intended to signify the years that extend from the inception of Futurism to the final, second issue of Lewis’s little magazine *Blast* (1914–1915).¹¹ But it also exists within what is often termed ‘early modernism’: the era prior to and during the First World War in which emerges a heightened consideration of the formal possibilities of literature.

¹¹ 1915 also coincides with Italy’s entry into the First World War, which is often agreed to mark the end of the first phase of Futurism.

This moment may be distinguished from the ‘high modernism’ of the 1920s, but it also, as Christopher Butler has argued, occurs ‘*after* something distinctly characterizable; after Romanticism, after English Victorianism [...], after bourgeois Realism or Naturalism — and, most particularly, after the Decadence, Aestheticism, and Symbolism of the late nineteenth century’.¹² The ‘sense of contrast with what has gone before’ that Butler identifies in early modernism, however, belies the continuities that exist, particularly between the thematic concerns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³ This is not to argue that early modernist formal experimentation did not differ significantly from that of the *fin de siècle*, or that the sense of an encroaching modernity was felt quite as acutely, or was responded to in quite the same way, before the turn of the century. But it is to contend that early modernism was a period of emergent change, and of transition in formal and thematic approaches to literature, which nevertheless maintains close thematic connections with its cultural predecessors. This stance is not uncomplicated by the fact that modernism is predominantly identified as a radical break with the past and as an articulation of newness, bolstered by Pound’s injunction to ‘Make it New!’ and Virginia Woolf’s (1882–1941) much-quoted argument that human nature fundamentally and irrevocably changed ‘on or about December 1910’.¹⁴ As Jane Goldman has written, modernism is a ‘retrospectively applied aesthetic order that anachronistically declares itself as a-temporal, or as “the new”’.¹⁵ However, ‘early modernism’, for Peter Brooker, is a term that allows ‘us to think of modernism as a

¹² Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. xv. Original emphasis.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ezra Pound, *Make it New: Essays by Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934). For an explanation for why I have dated this slogan so late, see the theory put forward by Michael North, in *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 162–69. Virginia Woolf, ‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’ [1924], in *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 32–36 (p. 32).

¹⁵ Jane Goldman, *Modernism, 1910–1945: Image to Apocalypse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. xv.

process of change and development rather than an evolution “upwards” towards an achieved end from which there is then a falling away’.¹⁶ Stripped of this teleological impulse towards high modernism, the critic should no longer search for a ‘before’ or ‘after’ modernism, but rather ‘at movements *within* modernism’.¹⁷ By thinking of modernism as a protean and heterogeneous field, it is possible to consider Futurism as a distinct phase of cultural experimentation in English literature.

The Reintegration of Art and Life in Futurism and Modernism

In the Decadent, Aestheticist, and Symbolist movements of the late nineteenth century, the separation of art from life (‘art’ being, of course, a general term under which literature is subsumed) is generally agreed to be at its most pronounced. In Decadence and Aestheticism, art is on one level treated as belonging to a separate, autonomous sphere: hence the expression ‘art for art’s sake’. But the movements also promoted a view of ‘life as art’, in which individual experience is aestheticised, and life is posited as material for aesthetic enjoyment.¹⁸ Futurism radically overturns this approach through its belief that art should be assimilated into everyday life: the movement aims for a total vision of the world, in which art is involved with society, and society is engrossed with art. It aimed to stimulate the masses through its politicised rhetoric, engaging with public culture to instigate a transformation in attitudes towards art and literature. Professing that ‘[e]very day we must spit on the *Altar of Art*’ in his ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ (1912), Marinetti

¹⁶ Peter Brooker, ‘Early Modernism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. by Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 30–47 (p. 33).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ R. V. Johnson, *Aestheticism* [1969] (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 1.

claimed to reject the sacralisation of art that had taken place in Aestheticism and sought to reintegrate art into daily life.¹⁹

Aestheticism was not a cohesive movement in the same sense that Futurism was.²⁰ Yet it was arguably underscored by the shared question, as Elizabeth Prettejohn has written, of ‘what art might be if not for the sake of anything else’.²¹ Scepticism regarding the role of art and the artist’s place in society developed as a result of the increasingly marginal place of the artwork, which was largely unrelated to any social function or value and thus seen as socially ineffective and unproductive. Peter Bürger argued in his influential *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974) that it is precisely through the aesthetic practices of the avant-garde that a transformation of the relationship between art and life is effected. The institutionalisation of art in bourgeois society produced a separation of art from the praxis of life, which became one of the most defining characteristics of the autonomy of bourgeois art.²² In Aestheticism, the element that defines art as an institution became the essential content of its work: as Bürger argues, the ‘apartness from the praxis of life that had always constituted the institutional status of art in bourgeois society now becomes the content of the works’.²³ Aestheticism is thus an intensification of art’s autonomy, which is to say its separation from bourgeois society. If in Aestheticism ‘art becomes the content of art’, and is thus far removed from life, the avant-gardes propose the sublation of art into the praxis of life: art ‘was not simply to be destroyed, but

¹⁹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ [1912], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 119–25 (p. 124). Original emphasis.

²⁰ Futurism was, as Stephen Bury has noted, the first artistic group to describe itself as a ‘movement’. Stephen Bury, *Breaking the Rules: The Printed Face of the European Avant-Gardes, 1900–1937* (London: British Library, 2007), p. 24.

²¹ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art’s Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 2.

²² Autonomy, in this sense, defines the status of art in bourgeois society but no assertions concerning the contents of works are involved.

²³ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* [1974], trans. by Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 27.

transferred to the praxis of life where it would be preserved, albeit in changed form'.²⁴ What distinguishes the avant-garde from Aestheticism is the 'attempt to organise a new life praxis from a basis in art'.²⁵ It is important to recognise that Bürger omits Futurism from his theoretical account of avant-garde movements, electing to focus solely on manifestations of Dada, Surrealism, and occasionally Cubism. Nevertheless, his theory of avant-garde interventions in the relationship between art and life bear significantly on Futurism's cultural aims.

Futurism was introduced as a movement of originary force, mythologised in Marinetti's car crash and subsequent rebirth from the '[m]aternal ditch' of an industrial 'factory drain'.²⁶ For Rosalind Krauss, this is a 'parable of absolute self-creation' in which Marinetti emerges 'as if from amniotic fluid to be born — without ancestors — a futurist'.²⁷ But while the birth narrative of the movement has rightly been treated as an analogy or dramatic representation, the notion of Futurism's originality and fundamental break with the past has often been taken as axiomatic in criticism. Rainey, for example, has recently declared Futurism to be 'the birth scene of aesthetic modernity'.²⁸ Although Futurism's achievements were unique in the methods it used to effect a break with the past, it must nevertheless be understood as a movement that bore profound relation to the artistic preoccupations of the late nineteenth century. Luca Somigli has convincingly demonstrated through tracing in great detail Futurism's genealogical lineage that the movement emerged from a protracted period of development and confrontation with the poetics of Decadence and Symbolism. He argues that:

²⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 50.

²⁷ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 157.

²⁸ Lawrence Rainey, 'Introduction: F. T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism', in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 1–39 (p. 2).

the origin of futurism can be read as the result of a powerful dialectical process that forces Marinetti to confront and discard a series of options regarding the place of the intellectual in modernity, and to forge out of these possibilities a new project that seems to offer an effective escape from the strictures of models handed down by the symbolist and decadent traditions.²⁹

Somigli's innovative method of reading the emergence of Italian Futurism in *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885–1915* (2003) has been formative for my understanding of Futurism in this thesis. Like Somigli, I read Futurism as a response to Symbolism and Decadence, although my analysis develops through a reading of the Futurists' position in the cultural field of pre-war Europe. But the precise intervention of this thesis is to demonstrate how Futurism was specifically appropriated in England as a mode of experimentation that allowed cultural practitioners to advance from a *fin-de-siècle* to a modernist aesthetic. In fact, in the early twentieth century the fissure between art and life was already a serious issue in England, and numerous cultural figures were beginning to voice concerns over the marginalisation of art from society, even suggesting means by which a more socially effective art might be achieved, as David Peters Corbett has recently argued. Reviewing Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1910, the English artist and writer Charles Ricketts (1866–1931) wrote that 'the modern mind has had little hope, less trust, and no belief in art [...] it has hugged other ideals', and expressed a desire for art to assume 'a closer contact between art and the business of life'.³⁰ One of the other significant figures to voice concerns over this relationship was the poet and art critic Laurence Binyon (1869–1943), who worked in the British Museum's department of prints and drawings.

²⁹ Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885–1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 95.

³⁰ Charles Ricketts, 'A Century of Art, 1810–1910', in *Pages on Art* (London: Constable, 1913), pp. 47–54 (p. 50 and p. 47). Quoted in David Peters Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary: British Art Across Victorianism and Modernism', in *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, ed. by Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 131–55 (p. 135).

Binyon expressed anxiety, in his articles in the *Saturday Review*, over what he perceived to be the inconsequential status of contemporary art in the years before Futurism's arrival in England, comparing contemporary art to 'an iridescent oil spread about on the surface of the muddy waters of our civilisation; it and life don't mix'.³¹ In particular, Binyon's concern was that art was separated by a wide gulf from the public, and he criticised 'aesthetic Epicureans who regard pictures as a kind of sweetmeat only to be enjoyed by superior persons' while applauding artists who were preoccupied with 'the artist's import to humanity'.³² His books *Painting in the Far East* (1908) and *The Flight of the Dragon* (1911), both of which treated the art of China and Japan, Binyon's specialist subject, discuss the close bond between art and life in those countries.³³ In *The Flight of the Dragon*, Binyon argued that 'for the public, art is not an end in itself; it is a spiritual experience which is to enrich its life'.³⁴ Commenting on Binyon's writing, Corbett has noted that his desire for a change in the status of art involves a recuperation of the aesthetic as a form of spiritual redemption, and does not require the destruction of the 'aura' of the artwork 'in order to reconstitute it as a critical intervention in social meaning'.³⁵ Nevertheless, it is notable that *The Flight of the Dragon* was reviewed favourably in the second issue of *Blast* in 1915 by Pound, who asserted that he would have written Binyon an 'homage' but for the fact that 'Binyon has not sufficiently rebelled'.³⁶ Certainly Binyon's theories on the exact role art should play in the modern era differ

³¹ Laurence Binyon, 'Two Ways of Art', *Saturday Review*, no. 106 (15 August 1908), p. 200. Quoted in Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary: British Art Across Victorianism and Modernism', p. 133.

³² Laurence Binyon, 'Old Masters and Modern Critics', *Saturday Review*, no. 102 (29 December 1906), p. 800. Quoted in Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary: British Art Across Victorianism and Modernism', p. 135.

³³ Laurence Binyon, *Painting in the Far East: An Introduction to the History of Pictorial Art in Asia, Especially China and Japan* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908); Laurence Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Art in China and Japan, Based on Original Sources* (London: John Murray, 1911).

³⁴ Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*, p. 110.

³⁵ Corbett, 'Crossing the Boundary: British Art Across Victorianism and Modernism', p. 135.

³⁶ Ezra Pound, 'Chronicles', *Blast*, vol. 2 (July 1915), pp. 35–36 (p. 36).

substantially from the avant-garde theories of subsequent years, but the point to be made is that Futurism was engaging in a very pertinent issue of contemporary cultural debate in England that had been ongoing since the turn of the century.

Thus, for the English writers under consideration in this thesis, Futurism represents less an artistic collective that had to be joined than a methodology by which the role of the author and the function of the literary work may be recalibrated in the modern era. For each author that I focus on this methodology differs substantially based on their individual preoccupations and concerns, and is also frequently complicated by simultaneous desires to anchor their work in the past.

International Futurism

In past Anglo-American scholarship Futurism has often been marginalised, the movement's association with fascism deterring serious academic study.³⁷ The Futurists formed a close alliance with Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party in 1918, when they formed their own Futurist Political Party. Although they broke officially with Mussolini in 1920, they remained closely involved with the Fascist movement until Futurism's demise with Marinetti's death in December 1944. Futurism's modernist revolution has thus been inextricably linked to the rise of early nationalist and fascist sentiments in the twentieth century. One of the most notable writers to have contributed to this view is undoubtedly Walter Benjamin, whose afterword to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) claimed that Futurism's aestheticisation of politics, which also involves an aestheticisation of war,

³⁷ See particularly Cinzia Sartini Blum, 'Introduction', *South Central Review*, Special Issue: 'Futurism and the Avant-Garde', vol. 13, no. 2-3 (Summer-Autumn 1996), 1-12 (pp. 2-3).

constituted a forerunner of fascism.³⁸ More recently, Paul Virilio has forcefully argued that Marinetti's veneration of war led 'directly [...] to the shower block of Auschwitz-Birkenau'.³⁹ Certainly the movement's verbal expressions of physical violence sit uncomfortably with an awareness of the historical trajectory of the first half of the twentieth century, but over-attention to this fact in Italian scholarship resulted only, as Cinzia Sartini Blum argued, in a splitting of scholarship along 'apologetic and condemnatory lines', with many academics celebrating only the artistic achievements of Futurism, divorced from its political ideology, and others highlighting only its later ideological sympathies.⁴⁰ In Anglo-American scholarship, Futurism was recuperated through the work of academics such as Walter Adamson, Berghaus, and Blum, which criticised the simplistic equation between Futurism and fascism, and often underscored the movement's left-wing origins.⁴¹ Over the last ten years in particular there has been a notable increase in scholarly work on Futurism, which suggests that the previous marginalisation of the movement has now definitively ended.⁴²

³⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* [1936], trans. by J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 36–38.

³⁹ Paul Virilio, *Art and Fear*, trans. by Julie Rose (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 16.

⁴⁰ Blum, 'Introduction', p. 3.

⁴¹ See Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909–1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1996); Günter Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909–1944* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴² Important English-language monographs on Futurism that have been published in the last ten years include: Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Luciano Chessa, *Luigi Russolo, Futurist: Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Selena Daly, *Futurism and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); and Paola Sica, *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism, and the New Sciences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). There have also been numerous significant edited collections, including: Günter Berghaus, ed., *Futurism and the Technological Imagination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009); Geert Buelens, Harald Hendrix, and Monica Jansen, eds., *The History of Futurism: The Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012); and Sasha Bru, Luca Somigli, and Bart Van den Bosche, eds., *Futurism: A Microhistory* (London: Legenda, 2017).

Nevertheless, a significant difficulty of studying Futurism has undoubtedly been the linguistic barrier of analysing Italian texts, which is why Futurist visual art has, on the whole, received more attention than its literature in Anglophone scholarship. Until relatively recently, the only English-language anthologies of Futurist texts were R. W. Flint's *Marinetti: Selected Writings* (1972) and Umbro Apollonio's *Futurist Manifestos* (1973).⁴³ These collections, however, were rather limited in their breadth of texts, and occasionally included incomplete versions of manifestos. By contrast, the range of Futurist texts available to Italian scholars, particularly in widely available collections such as Luciano de Maria's edited collection of Marinetti's writing *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (1968), and the two volumes of *Archivi del Futurismo* (1958; 1962), was immense.⁴⁴ In 2005, Willard Bohn lamented the fact that while 'Futurist texts are being reprinted in increasing numbers in Italy, very little of this vast literary corpus is available in [English] translation'.⁴⁵ Since the publication of Bohn's *Italian Futurist Poetry* (2005), however, which in itself sought to partially remedy the situation by making more Italian Futurist poetry accessible to English-speaking readers, important collections of translated texts have been published. Berghaus's *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings* (2006) has made available a much wider range of Marinetti's texts, particularly his political manifestos and treatises on Futurist theatre.⁴⁶ Even more recently, *Futurism: An Anthology* (2009), edited by Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, has provided a rich and eclectic spectrum of Futurist material for contemporary

⁴³ R. W. Flint, ed., *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, trans. by R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972); Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, trans. by Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1973).

⁴⁴ Luciano de Maria, ed., *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968); Maria Drudi Gambello and Teresa Fiori, eds., *Archivi del futurismo*, 2 vols (Rome: De Luca, 1958; 1962).

⁴⁵ Willard Bohn, 'Introduction', in *Italian Futurist Poetry*, ed. by Willard Bohn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 3–10 (p. 4).

⁴⁶ Berghaus, ed., *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*.

Anglophone scholars. The anthology comprises manifestos and theoretical writings by a number of Futurist writers and artists, not limited to Marinetti and including works by several women writers, as well as a collection of visual material and translations of creative texts.⁴⁷ Particularly with the publication of this collection, the primary sources afforded to Anglophone researchers of Futurism are more diverse than ever before.

In part, the increase in English translations of Italian Futurist texts has stemmed from a renewed interest in the movement around its centenary in 2009, but it is also indicative of a general shift in the field towards the international dimensions of Futurism. The notion of ‘Futurisms’ in the plural is in itself not a particularly new concept: the 1986 exhibition *Futurismo e Futurismi* [Futurism and Futurisms] at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice drew attention to the international manifestations of the movement, while John J. White explored ‘Futurisms’ across Italy, Russia, and Germany in his semiotics-oriented study *Literary Futurism* (1990).⁴⁸ In a different manner, Marjorie Perloff, deriving her theoretical basis from Renato Poggioli’s *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1968), which theorised ‘futurism’ not as a movement but as a ‘prophetic and utopian’ tendency common to avant-gardes, identified a ‘futurist moment’ that existed in the works of many avant-garde practitioners across Europe, whether nominally ‘Futurist’ or not.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the study of Futurism’s transnational manifestations has undoubtedly gained more traction over recent years. Berghaus’s edited volume *International Futurism in Arts and Literature* (2000) initiated new interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives on Futurism studies, and

⁴⁷ Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology*.

⁴⁸ Pontus Hultén, *Futurismo e Futurismi* (Milan: Fabbri Bompiani, 1986); John J. White, *Literary Futurism: Aspects of the First Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 1–7.

⁴⁹ Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 69; Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

the *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, which has been published annually since 2010, has cemented this trend towards global Futurisms, with special issues devoted to specific aspects of the movement alternated with more general, open issues. Most recently, the *Handbook of International Futurism* (2018) has offered short, comparative literature essays on aspects of Futurism's international influence.⁵⁰ The emphasis on geographical, cultural, and political centres and peripheries testifies to the 'topographical turn' in Futurist studies, a significant concern of which has been a process of 'decentring the avant-garde' from the dominant centres (i.e., Milan and Florence) of its cultural production.⁵¹

This thesis seeks to contribute to these recent developments in Futurism studies by exploring intersections between Futurism and English modernism. However, I am not interested in simply recapitulating the specific chronological events and histories of Futurism's 'invasion' of England in the pre-war years that have already been outlined by scholars such as Rainey, Roberto Baronti Marchiò, Somigli, Jonathan Black, and Matthew Gale.⁵² While attention is paid to Futurist activities in London in the first chapter, my principal focus centres on tracing the cultural networks of Futurism and English modernism in the pre-war years, questioning how and why Futurism came to be integrated in the cultural field of pre-war England, and, above all, the ways in which English cultural figures engaged with Futurist activities and discourses as a means of transforming past attitudes towards literature and art and experimenting with new aesthetic practices. In this regard, my

⁵⁰ Günter Berghaus, ed., *Handbook of International Futurism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

⁵¹ Per Bäckström and Benedikt Hjartson, 'Rethinking the Topography of the International Avant-Garde', in *Decentring the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Per Bäckström and Benedikt Hjartson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), pp. 7–34.

⁵² Rainey, 'Introduction: F. T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism', pp. 1–39; Roberto Baronti Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. by Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), pp. 100–21; Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, pp. 166–90; Jonathan Black, 'Great Britain', in *Handbook of International Futurism*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 506–26; Matthew Gale, 'A Short Flight: Between Futurism and Vorticism', in *Futurism*, ed. by Didier Ottinger (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), pp. 66–75.

argument counters accounts of Futurism that dismiss the movement as a largely ineffective force in England.⁵³ Certainly Futurism was frequently vilified, satirised, and caricatured in the English press, but it was also treated seriously by a number of English practitioners and critics, as my first chapter in particular will demonstrate. It also works against histories of both modernism and futurism that present the movements as significant or absolute breaks with the past.

In relation to attempts to ‘decentre’ Futurism, a number of scholars have criticised ‘Marinetti-centric’ approaches, citing the seminal importance of other writers and artists to the movement as well as the multiple, heterogeneous strands of aesthetic and political Futurism to be found in Italy alone.⁵⁴ Other critics, meanwhile, have argued that the movement cannot be effectively analysed without acknowledging the dominant influence of Marinetti, without whom Futurism — both in literature and in painting — would never have existed.⁵⁵ While the contributions of a range of figures in the formation of the movement’s aesthetic practices is undoubtedly an important avenue of Futurist studies, this thesis tends to affirm the latter view: that Marinetti’s leadership must be understood to be crucial to the Futurist programme and its cultural reach. In part, this is because its historical focus is the first, ‘heroic’ phase of Futurism (which is distinguished from the ‘second wave’ of Futurism that began after the First World War, which saw the creation of the Futurist Political Party and the movement’s involvement in Mussolini’s fascist party).⁵⁶

⁵³ See, for example, Peppis, ‘Futurism, Literature, and the Market’, pp. 132–51; Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 80.

⁵⁴ See particularly Enrico Crispolti, *Storia e critica del futurismo* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1986), p. xv; Walter L. Adamson, ‘The End of an Avant-Garde? Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in World War I and its Aftermath’, in *The History of Futurism: Its Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies*, ed. by Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, pp. 299–318 (p. 310).

⁵⁵ See Maurizio Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie*, 2 vols (Milan: Fabbri, 1977), I: *Studi sul Futurismo*, 5; Ernest Ialongo, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: The Artist and His Politics* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), p. 3; Daly, *Futurism and the First World War*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ The distinction between the first phase and second phase of Futurism is also defined by the deaths of two of the most prominent members of the movement during the First World War, Umberto Boccioni

During this period, the domination of Marinetti in the movement is particularly prominent. It is also a result of the fact that this study focuses chiefly on the literature of the movement, and while figures such as Boccioni and Gino Severini (1883–1966) were important proponents, their theories tended to focus on the pictorial aspects of Futurism. Most importantly, my research demonstrates that Italian Futurism’s contact with English cultural figures emerged principally through the efforts of Marinetti. Not only was he instrumental in the drive to transmit Futurism to England, giving most of the Futurist lectures and performances in London, he was also the sole Futurist correspondent of Monro, and formed the principal target of Lewis’s antagonism towards the movement in *Blast*. Through exploring the manner in which Loy appropriates Futurist techniques this focus shifts slightly to include the writers involved in the Florentine Futurist journal *Lacerba*: nevertheless, Marinetti remains a central figure.

English Modernism and Italian Futurism

Although engaging on a significant level with current trends in Futurism studies, this thesis is also situated more broadly within the field of modernist studies. Three of my chapters take as their focus English modernist cultural practitioners, and the thesis as a whole responds and contributes to existing analyses of the intersections between English modernism and Italian Futurism. An important aspect of this thesis is that it also attempts to extend the temporal boundaries of modernism by considering how Futurism was appropriated as a method of developing and subverting ideas inherited

and Antonio Sant’Elia, and the withdrawal from the movement of a number of its other leading protagonists, such as Carlo Carrà, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Gino Severini, by war’s end. The second wave of Futurism saw the increasing importance of writers such as Emilio Settimelli and Mario Carli, as well as the artists Fortunato Depero and Enrico Prampolini.

from the *fin de siècle*. It addresses key modernist issues such as the role of literature in public culture, the development of formal literary practices, mimetic tendencies in art, gender politics, and cosmopolitanism.

Harold Monroe's connections with Futurism have been understudied in literary criticism. The first book dedicated to Monroe was Joy Grant's *Harold Monroe and the Poetry Bookshop* (1967), which detailed Monroe's varied activities in literary London as 'poet, bookseller, publisher, editor, and versespeaker' over a period of twenty years.⁵⁷ Since this publication, the only other book-length study is Dominic Hibberd's biography of Monroe, *Harold Monroe: Poet of the New Age* (2001).⁵⁸ Both of these texts have been formative in understandings of Monroe's life and work, but are chiefly biographical rather than analytical in focus. However, the first volume of the *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (2009) contains a chapter by Hibberd on the journals that Monroe edited, the *Poetry Review* (1912–1915) and *Poetry and Drama* (1913–1914), which provides a detailed analysis of the place of these journals in the pre-war London literary milieu and how they represent an alternative, but no less valid, strand of modernism that was emergent in the early twentieth century.⁵⁹ Monroe is often mentioned briefly in accounts of Futurism in England in texts such as Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), Andrew Harrison's *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism: A Study of Influence* (2003), Marchiò's 'The Vortex in the Machine', and Domenika Buchowska and Steven L. Wright's 'The Futurist Invasion of Great Britain, 1910–1914'.⁶⁰ However, none of

⁵⁷ Joy Grant, *Harold Monroe and the Poetry Bookshop* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 1.

⁵⁸ Dominic Hibberd, *Harold Monroe: Poet of the New Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

⁵⁹ Dominic Hibberd, 'The New Poetry, Georgians, and Others', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1: *Britain and Ireland, 1850–1955*, 176–96.

⁶⁰ Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, pp. 31–32; Andrew Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism: A Study of Influence* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 37–38; Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', p. 105; Domenika Buchowska and Steven L. Wright, 'The Futurist

these texts address Monro's role in the transmission of Futurist discourses to England in any great detail, and tend only to mention the fact that Monro edited the journal in which five Futurist poems were published. Rainey's pronouncements on Monro are perhaps the most similar to my own in that he focuses on Monro's interest in Marinetti's cultural production and efforts to break down the barriers between art and life: nevertheless, even his analysis is limited to a very brief overview of Monro's statements, and a list of the Italian Futurist poets to be published in *Poetry and Drama*. Sustained critical attention has not been given to Monro's correspondence with Marinetti, or his complex and often conflicting pronouncements on the movement, or to the nature of the Futurist poetry that he translated, edited, and published. I identify Monro as a significant figure of Futurism's English network, and my writing contributes to existing knowledge on Monro as well as studies of Futurism in England.

By contrast, the relationship between Futurism and Vorticism has been well documented in literary criticism, and it is not possible to do full justice to the topic in this literature review given the sheer volume of material that has been published. Early studies of Vorticism include William C. Wees's *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (1972), which chronicles the movement in the context of the 'post-Edwardian' years from 1910 to 1914, and Richard Cork's two-volume study *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (1976), which frames Vorticism as an English abstract movement that formulated its aesthetic in response to technological modernity.⁶¹ Other important early studies are Timothy Materer's *Vortex: Pound, Eliot, and Lewis* (1979) and Reed Way Dasenbrock's *The Literary*

Invasion of Great Britain, 1910–1914', *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, vol. 2, ed. by Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 201–25 (pp. 214–15 and p. 217).

⁶¹ William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 9; Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting (1985).⁶² An issue of *Quaderno* titled 'Futurismo/Vorticismo' (1979), a volume edited by Giovanni Cianci that is dedicated to English Futurism, contains chapters that are for the most part in Italian.⁶³ This is also the case for Marchiò's monograph, adapted from his doctoral dissertation, titled *Il Futurismo in Inghilterra: Tra Avanguardia e Classicismo* [Futurism in England: Between Avant-Gardism and Classicism] (1990). Marchiò argues that while Britain was largely insensitive to artistic currents from the Continent in the early twentieth century, Vorticism developed as a result of Italian Futurism, Cubism, and the abstractionism of Wassily Kandinsky, and should therefore be seen as a manifestation of Futurism.⁶⁴ While Vorticism is usually understood as a pictorial movement, Marchiò states that it was in literature that it had the most significant impact on modernism, and his study explores Vorticism as a literary style that had a significant impact on the works of Pound, Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, Eliot, and Joyce.⁶⁵ Marchiò's 'The Vortex in the Machine' is however written in English, and features in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*. This article takes a similar line to that of Marchiò's monograph: it argues that Vorticism emerged as a result of the meeting of Futurism and British culture, and represented a 'utopian and prophetic phase in the lead-up to the birth of modernism in the interwar years'.⁶⁶

More recent studies of Vorticism have attended to the movement's nationalism. Paul Peppis's *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde, 1901–*

⁶² Timothy Materer, *Vortex: Pound, Eliot, and Lewis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979); Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

⁶³ Giovanni Cianci, ed., *Quaderno*, Special Issue: 'Futurismo/Vorticismo', vol. 9 (Palermo: Università di Palermo, 1979).

⁶⁴ Roberto Baronti Marchiò, *Il Futurismo in Inghilterra: Tra Avanguardia e Classicismo* (Roma: Bulzoni editore, 1990), pp. 8–9.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 9–10.

⁶⁶ Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', p. 100.

1918 (2000) centres on the English avant-garde emphasis on nationality and national character, and their ambition to create an ‘imperialist’ avant-garde group.⁶⁷ Focusing on a single modernist periodical and the group or movement most closely associated with it in each chapter, Peppis nevertheless returns to Lewis repeatedly throughout his book. A common tendency of these studies, however, has been to take for granted Vorticism’s assertions, much like Futurism, of a fundamental break with the past. Studies therefore tend to focus on Vorticism’s use of new marketing strategies or their advertising techniques. While the particular condition of English national cultural institutions and more wide-ranging considerations of English nationality are fundamental to my analysis of the movement, I also tend to consider Vorticism in the light of its particularly English cultural heritage: a stance that is rarely taken in studies of the movement. A notable exception to this rule is Miranda Hickman, whose book *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats* (2005) frames Vorticism as a campaign against ‘Willean effeminacy’, and *Blast* as a ‘counterblast’ against the *fin de siècle* because it was a text that ‘responded to “history”’.⁶⁸ For Hickman, it is through the use of ‘geometric hardness’ that the Vorticists fought against their predecessors, and in doing so she demonstrates the ‘fundamentally phobic and ambivalent’ attitude Vorticism held for its Aestheticist predecessors.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Andrew Thacker’s chapter on Vorticism in the *Oxford Handbook of Modernism* (2010) has demonstrated how the Vorticists and Imagists ‘share a cultural response with certain Decadent, aesthetic, and Symbolist groupings in the 1880s and 1890s’, pointing to the literary activities and organisation structure

⁶⁷ Paul Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde: Nation and Empire, 1901–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9.

⁶⁸ Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), p. 27 and p. 28.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44 and p. 25.

of the Rhymers's Club in London to display the continuities between the movements.⁷⁰ My approach to Vorticism may be seen in dialogue with these analyses because it locates the movement in relation to earlier literary and artistic groupings: however, my chapter also produces a broader history of Vorticism's aestheticist tendencies by demonstrating the extent of Lewis's connections to late English Aesthetes, as well as his use of Aestheticist motifs in his writing. By considering Lewis's use of Futurist strategies as a bid to transform these discourses, I place Lewis's Vorticist work at an uneasy intersection between the two movements.

Recent criticism has also turned to Futurism and its impact on the Imagist movement. Somigli devotes the last chapter of his book *Legitimizing the Artist* to the Futurist influence on the formation of Imagism.⁷¹ Sze Wah Sarah Lee has also addressed Imagism in her recent article in *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*.⁷² Although I do not devote a whole chapter to Imagism in this thesis, as a result of the sustained recent attention to this subject, the Futurist influence on the movement does emerge through my analysis of Monro.

Loy's relationship to Futurism has been less exhaustively documented in scholarly criticism than Vorticism, chiefly as a result of the fact that her writing was effectively forgotten in early studies of modernism; her poetry was republished only once in the 1950s.⁷³ Since being 'rediscovered' in the 1980s, however, Loy's writing has undergone a critical resurgence, and this particularly following the publication of Carolyn Burke's biography of Loy, *Becoming Modern*, and the republication of Loy's

⁷⁰ Andrew Thacker, 'London: Rhymers, Imagists, and Vorticists', *The Oxford Handbook of Modernism*, ed. by Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth, and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 687–705.

⁷¹ Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, pp. 162–216.

⁷² Sze Wah Sarah Lee, 'Futurism in English Art and Literature: The Response of Imagism and Vorticism', *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, vol. 8, ed. by Günter Berghaus, Domenico Pietropaolo, and Beatrice Sica (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 30–56.

⁷³ See Mina Loy, *Lunar Baedeker and Time-Tables*, ed. by Jonathan Williams (Highlands, NC: Jonathan Williams, 1958).

poetry collection *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* in 1996, as well as Maeera Schreiber and Keith Tuma's edited volume *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* in 1998.⁷⁴ As a result of the belated critical appreciation of her work, many early writings on Loy justifiably centred on recovering her work within the modernist canon. Now firmly beyond these recovery efforts, however, Loy studies have expanded to address her lesser-known texts and her complex, multi-faceted relations with the various avant-garde and modernist figures of the twentieth century, as well as her own poetic practices. Important studies of Loy's interactions with Futurism have been written by scholars that include Natalya Lusty, Rowan Harris, Laura Scuriatti, Lucia Re, and, most recently, Tara Prescott and Sarah Hayden;⁷⁵ and she has even been identified, in a study of Futurist women by Paola Sica, as an important precursor to the women writers of the Florentine Futurist journal *L'Italia Futurista* (1916–1918).⁷⁶

However, there has been a critical tendency to situate Loy far too much within the biographical details of her life. In the period of her life in which she lived in Florence, this emerges particularly in her romantic entanglements with Marinetti and Giovanni Papini (1881–1956), the latter being the subject of her long episodic poem 'Songs to Joannes' (1917). While biographical details of Loy's life are certainly

⁷⁴ Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996); Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Roger Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996); Maeera Schreiber and Keith Tuma, eds., *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* (Orono: The National Poetry Foundation, 1998).

⁷⁵ Natalya Lusty, 'Sexing the Manifesto: Mina Loy, Feminism and Futurism', *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2008), 245–60; Rowan Harris, 'Futurism, Fashion, and the Feminine: Forms of Repudiation and Affiliation in the Early Writing of Mina Loy', in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, ed. by Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson (London: Salt Publishing, 2010), pp. 17–46; Laura Scuriatti, 'Transnational Modernist Encounters in the Provinces: *Lacerba*, Mina Loy and International Debates on Sexual Morality in Florence', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 53, no. 3 (July 2017), 303–13; Lucia Re, 'Mina Loy and the Quest for a Futurist Feminist Woman', *The European Legacy*, vol. 14, no. 7 (December 2009), 799–819; Tara Prescott, *Poetic Salvage: Reading Mina Loy* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2017); Sarah Hayden, *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artishood* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018). It should also be noted that Scuriatti's book, *Mina Loy's Critical Modernism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), was published just prior to the submission of this thesis, in April 2019, which unfortunately means that I have not been able to consider this work.

⁷⁶ Sica, *Futurist Women*, pp. 161–66.

important for establishing the context of her work, I attempt to counter these tendencies by embedding her literature within the much broader contexts of Futurist discourses on women and contemporary sexology debates, as well as emergent feminist writing. There is also a tendency to place Loy in complete opposition to Futurism, in part derived from Burke's assertion in *Becoming Modern* that Loy could never be 'convinced' by Futurism's 'contempt for woman' — an assertion that is repeated in the important new website for Loy studies, *Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-garde*.⁷⁷ However, it is equally true to say that Loy was not 'convinced' by contemporary feminism debates, that her writings also display a contempt for femininity, and that she uses Futurism to modernise New Woman ideas inherited from the nineteenth century. As Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson have noted, Loy's various attacks on contemporary movements 'never seem to cohere to produce a single critical position'.⁷⁸ Loy must be conceived as an important English proponent of Futurism because she was selected as the sole English representative at the *Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale* at the Sprovieri Gallery in Rome in April and May of 1914.⁷⁹ Much like Hayden in her recent study *Curious Disciplines* (2018), I aim to show how Loy 'actively intervened' upon avant-garde movements rather than simply existing within them, demonstrating how Loy criticised Futurism but also created new ideas through her interaction with the movement.⁸⁰ However, unlike Hayden, my focus centres on the New Woman debates and theoretical texts that were circulating in Florence, both in the Anglophone and Italian Futurist communities, during the period in which Loy lived in the city. Loy's engagement with Futurism

⁷⁷ Burke, *Becoming Modern*, p. 157; *Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde*. <<https://mina-loy.com/biography/filipo-tomasso-marinetti/>> [accessed 17 June 2019].

⁷⁸ Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson, 'Introduction', in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, ed. by Potter and Hobson, pp. 1–11 (p. 4).

⁷⁹ See *Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale* (Rome: Sprovieri Gallery, 1914), pp. 35–36.

⁸⁰ Hayden, *Curious Disciplines*, p. 1.

differs in certain respects to Monro and Lewis, who used Futurist strategies to effect a transformation of aesthetic discourses: Loy, by contrast, uses the Futurist integration of the aesthetic and the political to develop emergent feminist discourses. Nevertheless, her writing has a social agenda, and thus represents another manifestation of Futurist aims to reconnect art and life.

Methodology and Chapter Structure

This thesis approaches its subject through a joint archival and critical methodology. One of the aims of this thesis is to present writings that have been understudied or disregarded in criticism of Futurism and the emergent English avant-garde, and to this end I employ contemporary newspaper and periodical articles and particularly correspondence in my analyses. In my chapter on Monro this materialises particularly through the unpublished letters that were sent to him from Marinetti, now held in the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA. These letters demonstrate an important relationship between the two writers, and place Monro at the centre of transnational Futurist networks in England. My work on Lewis has similarly used correspondence to illustrate his connections with the English Aesthetes, which are crucial for the understanding that these figures could be enthusiastic advocates of the Futurist directions in which Vorticism was moving. They indicate connections between the Aesthetes, Futurists, and Vorticists that are important for my overall argument that Futurism was a mode of experimentation in the early twentieth century that allowed literary practitioners to develop *fin-de-siècle* cultural discourses. Loy's unpublished letters to Mabel Dodge and Carl Van Vechten, contained in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, are also key sources for my reading of

Loy's approach to Futurism and early feminist debates, and elucidate the stimulus for her formulation of modern womanhood.

The critical aspect of my methodology works across different forms of theory. For the most part, this thesis operates through the lens of a sociology of literature and theories of cultural production, as theorised by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). Concerning itself chiefly with literary hierarchies and cultural capital, Bourdieu's theory is apposite for an analysis of Futurism's international cultural production because it attends to the relations between producers in the formation of their cultural output. This relational methodology attempts to overcome fabricated dichotomies between subject and object, as well as between the text and the reality in which it is produced. He theorises numerous fields, including the political field, the economic field, and the cultural field, each of which has its own laws and concerns. The cultural field is further split between the field of large-scale production and the field of restricted production, the latter of which is an 'economic world reversed' because it is relatively free from the demands of the economic field, and because goods are intended for a more narrow range of other cultural producers (and therefore created for symbolic recognition), rather than for the general public (and thus for commercial gain).⁸¹ Within this field, agents compete for symbolic recognition, and the space within the field — a space of literary position-takings (*prises de position*) — is understood to be vital to truly understand literary works.

Although Marinetti's aggressive use of marketing strategies has sometimes been considered an attempt at forging a reputation in order to reap commercial gain, this is highly unlikely because, as Anna Baldini has recently noted in her illuminating study of conflict within Italian periodical culture, Marinetti 'poured funds into his

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. by Randall Davies (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p. 29.

movement with no expected economic return, which put his cultural enterprise outside the realm of commercial publishing'.⁸² Within the field of cultural production, Futurism's activity may therefore be placed within the sub-field of restricted production, rather than the field of large-scale cultural production, in which field the only consumer of cultural works is intended to be a non-producer (that is, a member of the general public), and which competes for the largest possible market for financial reward. Although the Futurists certainly aimed to engage the public and effect a transformation of public consciousness, they also targeted their manifestos at other cultural producers, in order to convert them to their cause. This is also the case for the cultural production of Monro, Lewis, and Loy.

In my chapters on Monro and Lewis I also utilise Bourdieuan theory, but in my chapter on Loy I turn instead to use the second-wave feminist theory of Gayle Rubin and Monique Wittig. This is because I only use Bourdieu's critical apparatus where I find it useful to analyse the cultural material: while his work proves useful in several instances throughout the thesis, he is less relevant to Loy because his theory is constructed around male-dominated networks of cultural production. As Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace have observed, Bourdieu 'largely neglects to take gender into account either theoretically or empirically'.⁸³ Women writers were often excluded from these groups of cultural production, and Loy's involvement in official Futurist production was minimal. Although Loy may be perceived as the outlier of this study, in the sense that she is a female modernist operating outside the London literary milieu in which Monro and Lewis exist, her work is vital to consider in this

⁸² Anna Baldini, 'Allies and Enemies: Periodicals as Instruments of Conflict in the Florentine Avant-Garde (1903–15)', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Summer 2018), 7–28 (p. 23).

⁸³ Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)Positionings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), p. 2.

thesis precisely because it illustrates the diversity of English modernist experimentation with Futurism.

The extent to which these English writers knew the Futurists — and each other — varies enormously. Monroe first met Marinetti in Milan in 1913 and thereafter in England. According to Hibberd, Lewis was a regular at Monroe's Poetry Bookshop, where the two certainly would have met.⁸⁴ However he was not, as far as my research has shown, associated with Loy. Meanwhile, it is not known exactly how Lewis and Marinetti met, although Rainey has speculated that it was through their joint acquaintance with the artist C. R. W. Nevinson (1889–1946) that they met in November 1913. Marinetti had accompanied Nevinson to the Cave of the Golden Calf on 16 November, an avant-garde nightclub on Heddon Street for which Lewis had designed the prospectus and invitations.⁸⁵ Certainly Lewis had helped Nevinson to organise a dinner to welcome Marinetti to London at the Florence Restaurant on Rupert Street on 18 November 1913.⁸⁶ Lewis also briefly knew Loy when they were both living as painters in Paris in 1905, according to Lewis and Loy biographers.⁸⁷ Loy made her acquaintance with the Futurists in Florence in 1913, and was romantically involved with both Marinetti and Giovanni Papini (1881–1956). It seems, however, that the paintings of Lewis had made just as much of an impression on her as Futurist art, for as she states in a letter to Van Vechten, the art that had made her 'gasp' were 'a few Picasso's— Windham [*sic*] Lewis— & Nijinski [*sic*] dancing [...] I have gasped too at a picture of Carrà's & of course the shattering beauty of Marinetti's reading Futurist poems— and at the inebriation of early Papini in L'Uomo

⁸⁴ Hibberd, *Harold Monroe: Poet of the New Age*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Lawrence Rainey, 'F. T. Marinetti, Wyndham Lewis, and Tristan Tzara', in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 663–81 (p. 667).

⁸⁶ C. R. W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice* (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 57.

⁸⁷ See Burke, *Becoming Modern*, p. 77; Paul O'Keefe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), p. 53.

Finito [*sic*].⁸⁸ Nevertheless, a Bourdieuan methodology precludes the need for agents under consideration to exist in strict cultural groupings: theories of cultural networks do not demand strict association to exist, and individuals may work towards the same ends independently of each other. As Bourdieu writes, the ‘individuals may never meet, may even ignore each other systematically to the extent of refusing each other membership of the same class, and yet their practice remains determined by the negative relation which unites them’.⁸⁹

Chapter one considers Italian Futurism as a cultural phenomenon in the years before the First World War. Beginning with a re-evaluation of Futurism’s nationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies, it traces the movement’s attempts to position itself as a European phenomenon, analysing its spatial trajectories in the context of Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field. The Futurists’ failure to gain a substantial following in France led to a sustained campaign in England between 1910 and 1914, where it was often received with interest because it interacted on a significant level with socio-cultural discourses of decline and degeneration that were highly prevalent in England during the period, while also effecting a reversal of these discourses. This chapter lays the groundwork for the next three chapters, which each separately address the English writers working in response to Futurist literature and art in the early modernist period.

My second chapter focuses on Monroe, editor of *Poetry and Drama* and proprietor of the Poetry Bookshop. An important art-businessman in the pre-war London literary milieu, Monroe was crucial in the transmission of Futurist poetry to an English readership, and he influenced a concept of the movement in England as a late Symbolist phenomenon that was modern and progressive but also symptomatic of

⁸⁸ Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, n. d. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Carl Van Vechten Papers, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Fol. 1083. <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3868274> [accessed 24 June 2019]. Papini’s work is titled *Un Uomo Finito* (1913).

⁸⁹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 46.

Decadent tendencies. Monro was thereby able to distance himself from Futurism when required, but nevertheless maintained a keen interest in the movement, which he understood to be one of the few truly ‘modern’ movements, and a foundational source for Imagism.

Chapter three re-evaluates Lewis and the Vorticist movement and its associations with Futurism. Unlike most analyses of Lewis’s Vorticist phase, I argue that Lewis was connected at this time to a number of English writers and artists of Decadent Aestheticism: mapping this aspect of the cultural field in relation to Lewis allows for his preoccupations with this movement to be brought to the fore, but also to understand how Futurism was used by Lewis as a method of reconsidering the Aestheticist hierarchy between art and life. Nevertheless, tensions between the two movements continue to manifest in *Blast*’s texts, indicating Lewis’s desire to adopt a number of Futurist ideas while also attempting to redefine the movement as part of a specifically English literary genealogy.

Chapter four analyses Loy’s use of Futurist strategies in her articulation of a feminist modernism. Loy was heavily engaged with *fin-de-siècle* New Woman currents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but was attracted to Futurist methods of deconstructing and reconstructing social and cultural norms while living in Florence. Despite its infamous call for ‘contempt for woman’, Futurism actually theorised ‘woman’ as cultural construction, and considered women’s inferiority to be a product of centuries of marginalisation. Loy links the Futurist opposition to traditional sexual morality to a rhetorical construction of ‘superior woman’ to reverse the terms by which sexually liberated women are constructed as marginal, deviant subjects; more importantly, she appropriates Futurist methods of using language against its ideological grain to create a version of female identity that

is external to the heterosexual economy, which, I also demonstrate, anticipates second-wave feminist theory of the later twentieth century.⁹⁰

The aim of this thesis is to reconsider Futurism's place in the history of English modernism, placing it as an important development in the transition between *fin-de-siècle* and modernist literary forms, in order to offer a more nuanced account of the movement and its English manifestations.

⁹⁰ Mina Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 153–56 (p. 155).

An Imagined Community: Transnational Futurism and Futurism in England, 1909–1914

Although undoubtedly determined to promote the actions of the heroic individual, the Futurists were preoccupied with imagining types of community in the modern world. This often took the form of affiliation with the Italian nation state, the cultural and political regeneration of which was of primary importance in the Futurist programme. For F. T. Marinetti, Italy was to be a united, modern, and industrialised nation, unfettered by the shackles of its historical past, and displaying an aggressive military prowess. Yet the movement also identified with an international community; labelling itself at times as a European movement, taking advantage of increased levels of mobility across the Continent, and advocating an intellectual attitude of openness whereby the individual subject may communicate with the Other. Indeed, the movement's self-promotion in multiple countries and across multiple languages is a sign of an inherently cosmopolitanism outlook. For a number of scholars of Futurism, these conflicting tendencies have posed significant problems in understanding the movement as a coherent and cohesive entity. Marjorie Perloff has gone so far as to argue in her seminal text *The Futurist Moment* (1986) that the dual presence of a 'worldly, international outlook and a violently nationalist faith' is a 'paradox': much more recently, she has similarly noted the 'aggressive nationalism and jingoism that paradoxically co-existed with the utopian cosmopolitanism of the futurists'.¹ The coexistence of nationalism and cosmopolitanism can certainly be found from the very beginnings of the movement, in the first 'Manifesto of Futurism'. On the one hand the

¹ Perloff, *The Futurist Moment*, p. 6; Marjorie Perloff, 'The Audacity of Hope: The Foundational Futurist Manifestos', in *The History of Futurism: The Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies*, ed. by Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, pp. 9–30 (p. 11). See also Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 121.

document argued for a pro-war stance, a celebration of militarism and patriotism, and the national primacy of Italy. On the other, Marinetti was able to have the manifesto printed on the front page of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro* as a result of an extensive network of international associations.² And although the manifesto had appeared in a number of regional Italian newspapers prior to its publication in *Le Figaro*,³ its appearance in this newspaper, one that the London-based periodical *The Egoist* described in 1917 as a newspaper ‘to which every cultivated cosmopolitan used to think it a duty to subscribe’, signalled that the Futurists attempted to position their movement at the centre of literary modernism.⁴

Futurism’s nationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies should not, however, be understood to form a paradox. The heterogeneous and frequently ambiguous nature of both ideologies indicates that it is possible to inhabit both simultaneously. The first section thus attempts to disaggregate the distinct strains of nationalism and cosmopolitanism at work in Futurism. It explains Futurism’s nationalism in relation to the historical context of Italy in the 1900s, but also draws on more recently formulated theories and attitudes towards cosmopolitanism (which have not been used in analyses of Futurism to date) in order to demonstrate that while the Futurists did not understand themselves to be cosmopolitan, and frequently criticised the responsibility of bourgeois tourism in the anti-modernising tendencies of Italy, their use of radically modernised travel networks across Europe — both in terms of their

² Marinetti was able to have the manifesto printed in *Le Figaro* as a result of his connections with the Egyptian Pasha Mohammed El Rachî, a former business partner of his father who owned shares in the newspaper.

³ The manifesto was first published as a two-page pamphlet under the auspices of *Poesia*, in January 1909. It then appeared in the *Gazzetta dell’Emilia* (Bologna; 5 February 1909), *Il Pugnolo* (Naples; 6 February), *La Tavola Rotonda* (Naples; 14 February), *Gazzetta di Mantova* (Mantua; 9 February), and *L’Arena* (Verona; 9 and 10 February). The manifesto also appeared in excerpted form in *Il Mattino* (Naples; 8 and 9 February), *Il Piccolo della Sera* (Trieste; 10 February), and *Gazzetta di Venezia* (Venice; 13 February).

⁴ M. C., ‘Passing Paris’, *The Egoist*, vol. 4, no. 11 (December 1917), pp. 168–69 (p. 169). <<http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1308598970915629.pdf>> [Accessed 10 June 2019].

own frequent cross-European promotional tours and the transnational print production they espoused — places them within the bounds of cultural cosmopolitanism. Indeed, their wide dissemination of manifestos, an inherently popular genre, was intended to instil in individuals living across Europe, who had never met face to face, a sense of unity through the act of reading. This engagement with the masses, facilitated primarily, although not uniquely, by a propagandised print media, indicates that the Futurists were perhaps the first literary movement to realise that if print capitalism could form a national political consciousness, then it also had the potential to create an *international cultural consciousness*. In their attempts to cultivate semi-marginal literary, artistic, and even political groups, the Futurists published manifestos throughout the continent immediately after their founding gesture: the initial manifesto was translated into English, Spanish, German, and Russian, and additional manifestos were subsequently written that targeted specific countries and challenged their variously passéist foibles.⁵ Their development of the poetic form of ‘words-in-freedom’ also indicates the importance of cross-cultural communication, its ‘telegraphic lyricism’ implicitly transmitting literature across spatial coordinates.⁶

The second section of the chapter places Futurism more concretely within the more narrowly defined, relational space of international fields of literary production in the pre-war period, extending the analysis of Pierre Bourdieu to the transnational level. Having established that Futurism is, in an abstract sense, at once politically nationalist and culturally cosmopolitan, this section demonstrates that Futurism’s cosmopolitanism arises as a result of its nationalist positioning. Futurism existed within an inherently internationalised space of literary production at the beginning of

⁵ See, for example, F. T. Marinetti, ‘Contro la Spagna passatista’, *Prometeo*, vol. 3, no. 20 (June 1911), pp. 517–18.

⁶ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Destruction of Syntax — Radio Imagination — Words-in-Freedom’ [1913], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 143–51 (p. 149).

the twentieth century, in which France, and particularly Paris, was the centre of the modern literary and artistic world: the ‘denationalized capital’ of a ‘world republic of letters’, to use Pascale Casanova’s terms, where both the dominant pole of the restricted field — at that time the Symbolists — and the consecrating authorities existed.⁷ This ‘denationalized’ space was, however, inherently nationalist, marking an uneven distribution of literary capital in Europe wherein France assumed the position of dominant counterpart to Italy. Despite ostensibly returning to Italy to inaugurate their new cultural movement, and thereby performing a heretical reaction against the dominant pole, I demonstrate that the Futurists were never to actually reject the French cultural field, because they needed it to promote Italian cultural production precisely within that dominant national field. I thus characterise Futurism as a transnational movement: a border-crossing cultural entity that challenges the boundaries of the nation state, even if it remained broadly centralised in its country of origin, and aimed for Italian national primacy. However, the existence of other avant-garde cultural groups in France necessitated the establishment of Futurism in national fields that were also dominated in the international cultural hierarchy.

Section three reviews the attempts the Futurists made to gain a position in the English cultural field between 1909 and 1914. Although relatively few serious attempts were made in Futurism’s early years, these increased exponentially after the Sackville Gallery ‘Exhibition of the Works of the Italian Futurist Painters’ in 1912. The movement was initially viewed with some suspicion in the English press, but contrary to a number of literary critics, who argue for the limited reach of Futurism in these years, I argue that Futurism’s cultural agenda fitted well into the discourses of social and cultural degeneration that were prevalent in Britain in the period. Certainly

⁷ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 34 and p. 4.

the extent of press responses to the movement was immense: as Lawrence Rainey has noted, over five hundred articles on Futurism were written in England alone between 1912 and 1914.⁸ I argue that it was through the consecrating influence of the Sackville Gallery managers that Futurism was first able to truly enter the English cultural field: thereafter, English cultural figures, if not the general public, became more receptive to its programme, largely on the basis that the movement represented the only cultural force in the country that truly attempted to induce a revitalising effect on modern culture. Futurism's first efforts were chiefly concentrated in the visual arts in England, because its main proponents did not speak English: however, the Futurists' literary intentions to reconcile the broad divide between art and life were responded to well because they intersected with extant English aims to rejuvenate a stagnant and elitist national culture.

I. Conceiving Space: Futurism's Nationalist and Cosmopolitan Tendencies

Perloff's articulation of the 'paradox' inherent in Futurism's approach to community in its aesthetic programme is perhaps the most extreme expression of the dual nationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies of Futurism, but it is far from being the only assertion of this view. Futurism's simultaneous nationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies have been frequently commented on and are most often conceived as inherently contradictory. For some scholars this is articulated as an 'uneasy combination', while others have identified the 'tensions' of the presence of both ideologies.⁹ For Cinzia Sartini Blum it is a fundamental problem that 'while

⁸ Rainey, 'Introduction: F. T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism', p. 1.

⁹ Andreas Kramer, 'Geographies of Futurism: Mapping the First Avant-Garde', in *One Hundred Years of Futurism: Aesthetics, Politics, and Performance*, ed. by John London (Bristol: Intellect, 2017), pp. 49–78 (p. 51); Shirley W. Vinall, 'The Contradictions of Marinetti: Right-Wing Revolutionary and

celebrating the new forces of flux and exchange that transgressed national boundaries, the futurists fanatically embraced a militant nationalism and defended, with great enthusiasm, their homeland's borders in both world wars'.¹⁰ It is clearly a difficulty for scholars of Futurism to reconcile the two ideological positionings, which seem inherently contradictory: while one argues for the need to maintain national borders and boundaries, the other transgresses them. For many scholars, nationalism and cosmopolitanism are inherently incompatible forms of geographical imagination.¹¹

Notwithstanding primordialist theories of nationalism, and analyses of cosmopolitanism that root its philosophical framework in the Enlightenment and the abstract, theoretical writings of Immanuel Kant, both ideologies are best situated as worldviews that arise in response to modernity and the formation of the subject around new modes of experience. The social processes of modernisation, such as industrialisation, scientific discoveries, technological development, urbanisation, and mass society meant that, as Raymond Williams has argued, 'any assumption of a knowable community — a whole community, wholly knowable — became harder and harder to sustain'.¹² The dislocation of the subject and the consequent sense of fragmentation so central to the modern experience occasioned, as Jessica Berman writes, 'on the one hand an almost desperate effort to recoup community in the form of nationalism and fascism, and on the other hand an insistence on deepening cosmopolitanism'.¹³ Both ideologies are models that possess utopian dimensions for imagining ideal conditions of social organisation, attempt to provide an understanding

Francophile Nationalist', in *The Pen and the Sword: Right-Wing Politics & Literary Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Richard Griffiths (London: King's College London, 2000), pp. 11–28 (p. 11).

¹⁰ Blum, *The Other Modernism*, pp. 1–2.

¹¹ Barney Warf, 'Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Geographical Imaginations', *The Geographical Review*, vol. 102, no. 3 (July 2012), 271–92 (p. 271 and pp. 280–81).

¹² Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 165.

¹³ Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 3.

of the world beyond the individual subject's immediate spatial context, and accept modernity as the catalyst for a multitude of transformations that had impacted on society, consciousness, and human sensibility.

Futurism's political tendencies have been overwhelmingly described as belligerently nationalist by cultural critics, who have emphasised the movement's commitment to the national collective. On a wider contextual level, it is interesting to examine the theory of the nation offered by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983). Anderson defines the nation as an 'imagined political community' because it cannot be predicated upon face-to-face interaction among its members, but it is also imagined as 'inherently limited' because it has finite, if elastic, borders.¹⁴ Arguing that the nation is 'imagined' is not to imply it is a fabrication, but rather that it is socially constructed: in this sense any communities that are larger than 'primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined'.¹⁵ Communities are formed by a 'deep, horizontal comradeship', a fraternity that embraces the notion of a shared communion.¹⁶ Nationalism thus operates at the level of affect: it is a 'cultural artefact' that is more similar to a religion than an ideology, and is based on a utopian concept of the nation that commands a 'profound emotional legitimacy' in spite of its 'philosophical poverty, and even incoherence'.¹⁷ Nationalism promotes a geography of belonging through common origins, values, concerns, and expectations, which end at the national border. Marinetti expresses such a form of community when he writes that by embracing Italy he held 'the greatest possible number of my own and of our shared ideals, interests, and needs, which are

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6–7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

bound up together and in no way opposed to one another'.¹⁸ In Marinetti's assumption of a single national identity founded on shared political and social characteristics he displays a nationalist outlook: one that takes for granted that nation, state, and society are the only natural social and political forms of the modern world.

Futurism's nationalism emerged from the malaise of *fin-de-siècle* Italy, in which period there existed a strong sense that the Risorgimento — the process of Italian unification that was completed in 1871 — had failed in its principal aim to create a united Italian political identity. Between 1894 and 1900 Italy had entered into a prolonged political, economic, and social crisis: for the most part this was the result of the unsuccessful and humiliating attempt to conquer territory in Abyssinia (1895–1896), corruption scandals involving the widespread bribery of government officials, and the assassination of King Umberto I by an anarchist in 1900. There was also widespread civil disorder in response to inflated food prices in a time of famine, culminating in the Milan bread riots of May 1898, which were violently quelled by government armed forces. This crisis appeared to have been diffused under the government of Giovanni Giolitti, who implemented a new era of liberal politics in Italy between 1901 and 1914. During this period, Italy's economic growth was faster than any other country in Europe: having fallen to 0.3 per cent during the period from 1888 to 1896, it rose to 6.7 per cent in 1907, the year of the international financial crisis.¹⁹ Giolitti was also committed to social reform and rejected authoritarian methods of governance: recognising that industrial development in Italy had engendered a growing social demographic of workers, he aimed to incorporate them

¹⁸ F. T. Marinetti, 'Futurist Patriotism' [1919], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 321–22 (p. 322).

¹⁹ Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics*, p. 4.

into political life rather than suppressing them.²⁰ Between 1900 and 1913, the wages of industrial workers increased by approximately forty per cent.²¹ However, Giolitti's rule was not without outspoken criticism, for while he governed parliament with an overwhelming majority for over ten years, much of the population saw his longevity in office as a symbol of the corrupt national political establishment, reinforced by networks of bankers, businessmen, and industrialists who controlled the upper echelons of society. Although superficially a liberal democracy, Italy's policy of *trasformismo* had done nothing to fundamentally alter an archaic political system that had been dominated by regional aristocratic families and the landed gentry for centuries.²² As such, Emilio Gentile has argued that 'to many contemporaries and especially the young, Giolitti's long parliamentary supremacy was a reflection of political corruption, a crisis of state, a weakening of the nation and serious moral decay of individual and collective conscience'.²³ Moreover, Italy still lagged behind other European nations in terms of modernisation and industrialisation. This experience of a decadent Italy stimulated what Gentile has termed a 'myth of Italianism', a form of nationalism specific to the Italian avant-garde groups of the early twentieth century who were preoccupied with overturning the backwards status of their country and providing a sense of national identity through radical cultural,

²⁰ As Paul Corner has argued, Giolitti's radical strategy to stabilise the Italian state was essentially to replace 'exclusion with inclusion', and derived from the conviction that it was 'better to resolve conflicts through mediation than confrontation'. Paul Corner, 'State and Society, 1901–1922', in *Liberal and Fascist Italy, 1900–1945*, ed. by Adrian Lyttleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 17–43 (p. 22).

²¹ Adrian Lyttleton, 'Introduction', in *Liberal and Fascist Italy, 1900–1945*, ed. by Lyttleton, pp. 1–16 (p. 2).

²² *Trasformismo* was the process of making a flexible government coalition that was designed to isolate the extreme Left and Right. It developed 'in particular as a consequence of the emergence of the new mass parties [and] became a collective action, that is, a strategy to absorb distinct groups within the centrist majority'. Marco Valbruzzi, 'Trasformismo', in *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, ed. by Erik Jones and Gianfranco Pasquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 26–40 (p. 32).

²³ Emilio Gentile, 'The Struggle for Modernity: Echoes of the Dreyfus Affair in Italian Political Culture, 1898–1912', *The Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 33, no. 4 (October 1998), 497–511 (p. 497).

political, and social regeneration.²⁴ For Roger Griffin, 'Italianism' is thus a form of political modernism.²⁵ Modernism in Italy was bound with contemporary discourses of nation making: in this sense there existed a cultural synthesis between nationalism and modernity.

Central to the Futurists' nationalist aim of renewal was the idea of war as a positive force: a trial that was essential for the development of a renewed Italian consciousness. The Futurists argued that 'only a love of danger and heroism can purify and regenerate our nation', and to this end they maintained a policy of interventionism in the pre-war years: support of Italy's entry into the First World War on the side of the Triple Entente (Italy was, however, part of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary).²⁶ This idealisation of violence, articulated so forcefully by Futurism in its assertion of war as 'the only hygiene of the world', was however common to many Italian intellectuals of the era, who regarded it as a necessary catalyst for national palingenesis, and a periodic purging that was crucial for the health of the collective.²⁷ Marinetti argued that like individuals, who had to fight against 'infection and high blood pressure by means of the shower and the bloodletting', peoples must also 'follow a constant, healthy regime of heroism, and indulge themselves with glorious bloodbaths!'²⁸ Italy was thus to be formed through a heroic ideal, its people embodying an ethos of sacrifice, an enthusiasm for battle, and

²⁴ Emilio Gentile, 'The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism', trans. by Lawrence Rainey, *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1994), 55–87 (p. 59).

²⁵ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 198.

²⁶ F. T. Marinetti, 'The Necessity and Beauty of Violence' [1910], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 60–72 (p. 62).

²⁷ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 51. The poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) promoted interventionism during the First World War. Benito Mussolini was also a prominent interventionist figure, as was the journalist Cesare Battisti. According to Selena Daly, Futurist interventionism was constantly overshadowed by these figures, and was less effective and influential than both the Futurists and scholars of Futurism have previously acknowledged. See Daly, *Italian Futurism and the First World War*, p. 11.

²⁸ Marinetti, 'The Necessity and Beauty of Violence', p. 61. 'Bloodletting' here refers to the pseudoscientific medical practice in which blood was withdrawn from a patient in order to prevent or cure illness.

loyalty to their country: in short, an absolute commitment to the state. The individual, in Futurism, is subsumed to the life of the nation, and the heroic action of the individual is fundamental to national renewal.²⁹ In this sense, Futurism was a supremely nationalist movement, which eagerly anticipated the First World War as a glorious event that had the potential to facilitate Italian hegemony by hastening the country's progress into modernity.

Futurism promoted a nationalist outlook and declared itself opposed to cosmopolitanism. Its proponents inextricably linked the idea of cosmopolitanism with Italy's archaeological and cultural past: a notion that was antithetical to their aim, as Marinetti put it, of 'containing and feeling in oneself the whole of Italy and the Italians of tomorrow'.³⁰ Tanya Agathocleous and Jason Rudy have argued that usages of the term 'cosmopolitan' in the late nineteenth century were often, although not exclusively, pejorative, denoting 'a lifestyle of bourgeois decadence', as well as an 'accusation of "rootlessness"'.³¹ This is perhaps unsurprising in view of the imperial policies and nationalist agendas of many European countries in the pre-war period, which were anathema to the notion of non-national affiliation. Correspondingly, in Futurist texts the term is only ever invoked as a negative descriptive for tourists: a foreign, voyeuristic bourgeoisie that perpetuated the view of Italy as a country of solely art-historical interest, which Umberto Boccioni and others scathingly referred to as 'an immense Pompeii of whitewashed sepulchres'.³² In 'Electrical War', published in *Le Futurisme* (1911), Marinetti declared that 'Italy will cease to be the

²⁹ Quoted in Ernesto Ialongo, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: The Artist and His Politics* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), pp. 293–94.

³⁰ Guglielmo Ravidà, 'The Meaning of War for Futurism: Interview with *L'Avvenire*' [1915], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 238–44 (p. 241).

³¹ Tanya Agathocleous and Jason Rudy, 'Victorian Cosmopolitanisms: Introduction', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 38, no. 2 (2010), 389–97 (p. 389).

³² Umberto Boccioni and others, 'Manifesto of the Futurist Painters' [1910], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 62–64 (p. 62).

love-room of the cosmopolitan world’, and that ‘having scoffed at every foreigner who despises us as singers of serenades, as tour guides or beggars, we have forced them to admire us as the most gifted race on earth’.³³ Venice was roundly reviled as the ‘bejewelled hip-bath of cosmopolitan courtesans, the *cloaca maxima* of passéism’, because its inhabitants’ subservience to foreigners had reduced them to ‘hotel waiters, tour guides, pimps, antiquaries, forgers, fakers of old pictures, plagiarists, and copyists’.³⁴ Cosmopolitanism, in Futurism, is couched in the language of invasion: tourism is presented as the foreign occupation of Italy under another guise; the figure of the prostitute employed as a metaphor for Italy’s exploitation and the violation of national boundaries that the phenomenon entails. This was, of course, utterly opposed to Futurism’s desire for Italy to play a significant role in European affairs as a nation that was ‘intensely agrarian, industrialised, and commercialised’: a nation that looked outwards, and not inwards.³⁵

Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism is a heterogeneous phenomenon and thus irreducible to one meaning. Formed from *kosmou* [world] and *politês* [citizen], the word denotes interconnectedness, but may signal at once a freedom from local attachments, a belief that human beings belong to a shared community, an inclination towards international engagement, or a desire to extend the moral and political affairs of people, institutions, and societies beyond the nation. It is more productive to think of *cosmopolitanisms* in the plural, because the term can be disaggregated into multiple distinct strains, including political and cultural cosmopolitanisms. Political cosmopolitanism signals the ideal of a democratic principle of equal rights for all

³³ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Electrical War’ [1911], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 98–104 (p. 104).

³⁴ F. T. Marinetti and others, ‘Against Passéist Venice’ [1910], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 67–70 (p. 69). The *cloaca maxima* (literally ‘greatest sewer’) was the largest sewage system of ancient Rome, constructed in c.600 BC.

³⁵ Ravidà, ‘The Meaning of War For Futurism’, p. 240.

nations, a model that was initially proposed by Kant through his notion of an administrative federation of nations: a *polis* with extensive global reach.³⁶ More recently, it has been evoked in the moral philosophy of Martha Nussbaum and her theory of a concentric model of identifications.³⁷ This normative ambition was certainly antithetical to the Futurist mode of political thought, which took national primacy to be axiomatic and declared ‘the hypothesis of a friendly union of peoples to be outmoded and utterly dispensable’.³⁸ By contrast, cultural cosmopolitanism may denote an orientation that exists in real, lived experience, and which encompasses an intellectual attitude of openness, a desire to break down divisions (to interact and communicate with the Other), and to enact self and societal transformation. This phenomenon was first formulated by Ulf Hannerz, who described cosmopolitanism as a ‘state of mind’, which involves at once an ‘intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences’ and a ‘personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting’.³⁹ Expanding on Hannerz’s theory, John Urry has written of cultural cosmopolitanism as dependent on scopic regimes of modernity that include ‘extensive’ mobility; curiosity about people, places, and cultures; openness towards the Other; a willingness to move outside tourist areas; the ability to ‘*locate* one’s own society and culture in terms of a

³⁶ Under Kant’s administrative federation, ‘every nation, even the smallest, can expect to have security and rights, not by virtue of its own might or declarations regarding what is right, but from [...] a united might, and from decisions made by the united will in accord with laws’. Immanuel Kant, ‘Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose’, in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 29–40 (p. 34).

³⁷ See, for example, Martha C. Nussbaum, ‘Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism’, *Boston Review* (1 October 1994). <<http://bostonreview.net/martha-nussbaum-patriotism-and-cosmopolitanism>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

³⁸ F. T. Marinetti, ‘War, the Sole Cleanser of the World’ [1911], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 53–54 (p. 53).

³⁹ Ulf Hannerz, ‘Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture’, in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. by Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), pp. 237–51 (p. 238 and p. 239).

wide-ranging and geographical knowledge'; and 'semiotic skill'.⁴⁰ In this less detached and less abstract formulation, cosmopolitanism is a disposition that emerges from the radical changes in technology that were transforming the spatial foundations of everyday life. For Bruce Robbins, this 'actually existing' cosmopolitanism is a 'reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance'.⁴¹

Despite their unequivocally anti-cosmopolitan statements, the Futurists took advantage of the unprecedented levels of mobility across Europe to disseminate their cultural vision beyond the nation. Raymond Williams has argued that this mobility — an 'endless border crossing' — was integral to avant-garde groupings of the early twentieth century, which arose in 'the new metropolitan cities, the centres of the also new imperialism, which offered themselves as transnational capitals of an art without frontiers'.⁴² The development of the railway networks in particular had led to a new freedom of movement across Europe, which remained relatively unchanged until the introduction of the passport and more stringent laws on border control with the beginning of the First World War in 1914. Such geopolitical conditions meant that, as Stephen Kern has written, national 'frontiers were nothing but symbolic lines'.⁴³ Freedom of mobility increased levels of international exchange and cultural production across the Continent, which the Futurists used to their advantage by employing the publicity-generating cultural forms of foreign newspapers, lectures, performances, and international exhibitions to promote their movement. Evoking the

⁴⁰ John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 167. Original emphasis. As Urry's title indicates, these scopic regimes are also associated with consumption. This argument has been furthered in Jennie Germann Molz, 'Cosmopolitanism and Consumption', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, ed. by Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 33–52.

⁴¹ Bruce Robbins, 'Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 1–19 (p. 3).

⁴² Raymond Williams, 'When Was Modernism?', in *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 31–35 (pp. 33–34).

⁴³ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 194.

café culture of Paris, Marinetti wrote that the Parisian newspapers had nicknamed him ‘The Caffeine of Europe’ following the publication of the ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’: the boost of energy that was needed to kick-start the Continent, and not only Italy, into a new era of aesthetic modernity.⁴⁴ Although this sobriquet was most likely a piece of self-styled propaganda, it is significant that Marinetti chose to present himself publicly as a European cultural innovator rather than as a purely Italian moderniser. This interpretation becomes particularly valid when considered that the autobiographical piece also appeared in excerpts in the Italian fascist-Futurist newspaper *L’Impero* in 1925, but this time under the unambiguous title ‘Caffeina dell’Europa’.⁴⁵ The Futurists claimed to be a purely Italian movement that was driven by patriotism and violence: however, their conscious attempts at international cultural engagement and their movements across the Continent indicate a significant compromise of this aggressively nationalistic attitude.

By understanding cosmopolitanism as multiple and specific rather than as a single abstract ideal, it becomes possible to see Futurism as a movement that is at once politically nationalist and culturally cosmopolitan: two tendencies which may exist in tension with each other but are far from mutually exclusive. Futurism’s identity as a cosmopolitan movement is achieved not through political commitment or ethical practice, but rather through its consideration of the unknowable community of the globe and in its interest in the potential for international engagement. Marinetti’s literary manifesto ‘Destruction of Syntax — Radio Imagination — Words-in-Freedom’ (1913) does not explicitly privilege nationality, but rather considers the individual’s changing relationship with the global community as a result of the experience of modernity: the ‘complete renewal of human sensibility’ and the

⁴⁴ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Self-Portrait’ [1929], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 5–8 (p. 8).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

‘gigantic increase in the sense of humanity’ are attributed to both new scientific discoveries and the advancement of technology which have altered senses of time and space. The text celebrates the sense of ‘the earth shrunk by speed’, the new pace and rhythm of everyday life, and a ‘negation’ of the distances that separate individuals and cultures from each other.⁴⁶ Marinetti writes:

By means of the newspaper, the inhabitant of any mountain village can tremble with anxiety every day, following the Chinese in revolt, the suffragettes of London or New York, Doctor Carrel, or the heroic dogsleds of the polar explorers. The pusillanimous and sedentary inhabitant of any provincial town can allow himself the inebriation of danger by going to the movies and watching a great hunt in the Congo. He can admire Japanese athletes, Negro boxers, endless American eccentrics, and very elegant Parisian women by spending a franc to go to the variety theatre. Then, tucked up in his bourgeois bed, he can enjoy the distant and costly voice of a Caruso or a Burzio.⁴⁷

The transcultural encounter is, however, in this instance imagined not as a result of the individual subject’s travel or actual movement in space, but instead vicariously, as a semi-voyeuristic act of engaging with cultural difference. In this sense, Futurism’s cosmopolitanism is close to being an act of individual consumption: as critics such as Jennie Germann Molz have recently pointed out, ‘cosmopolitan desires are negotiated alongside the commodification of difference’.⁴⁸ Advocating a cultural attitude of international engagement, by which means the individual has the potential to learn more about the Other, Futurism appears to reject a policy of international competitiveness that is usually a fundamental characteristic of nationalist discourses. Marinetti writes: ‘Today man possesses a sense of the world [...] he has a burning need to know what his contemporaries are doing in every part of the globe. Whence the necessity, for the individual, of communicating with all the peoples of the earth’.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Marinetti, ‘Destruction of Syntax’, p. 143 and p. 144.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

⁴⁸ Molz, ‘Cosmopolitanism and Consumption’, p. 37.

⁴⁹ Marinetti, ‘Destruction of Syntax’, p. 144.

There is a question, however, as to how far this communication is intended to be a two-way process between the subject and the Other.

It is notably through print culture that Futurism's sense of community is established. In Anderson's formulation of nationalism, forms of affect are generated within the boundaries of the nation state, but it is not because of national borders that this affect is created. Instead, it is print capitalism — which defines a common language and discourse — that forms the idea of an imagined community.⁵⁰ Over the nineteenth century, the expansion of the rail networks and the comparative ease and speed of travel were in part to cause the 'newspaper boom': a rapid increase in the both the production and the distribution of newspapers.⁵¹ While a number of scholars have rightly demonstrated the immense effect that this had on reading habits at a national level, it is also true that the printed media began to exist increasingly on a transnational scale in modernity.⁵² Jane Chapman has recently shown the transnational and cross-language influence of periodicals in the nineteenth century, noting, as an example, the vast number of German-language periodicals published in

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 44.

⁵¹ On the 'newspaper boom' of the nineteenth century in Britain, see: Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); Ying Wang, 'Lexical Bundles in News Discourses 1784–1983', in *Diachronic Developments in English News Discourse*, ed. by Minna Palander-Collin, Maura Ratia, and Irma Taavitsainen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), pp. 97–116 (pp. 108–10). On the growth of the newspaper industry in France in the nineteenth century, see Edmund Birch, *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 3; Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 118. In Italy, the development of the newspaper industry came later, in part as a result of the political upheavals of the Risorgimento: growth came in the later half of the nineteenth century. In the newly unified country there were significant regional differences in sales due to socio-economic conditions and illiteracy rates, but in Milan, where the Futurists were mainly based, the *Corriere della Sera* had been established in 1886, and by the turn of the century was Italy's leading newspaper. See Matthew Hibberd, *The Media in Italy: Press, Cinema, and Broadcasting from Unification to Digital* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), pp. 26–27.

⁵² Matthew Rubery, for example, has demonstrated that the purchase of a daily newspaper for private reading in Britain nearly quadrupled between 1880 and 1914: the *Daily Mail*, as one of the most highly subscribed newspapers of the period, could count almost one million readers in 1901, during the Second Boer War. Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction after the Invention of News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 6–7.

London.⁵³ By the early twentieth century, therefore, print capitalism may be understood as nationalist, but it can also be comprehended as a manifestly cosmopolitan phenomenon. Yet the Futurists were perhaps the first literary group to realise that if the printed media could form a collective national political consciousness, it could also be used effectively to create an international cultural consciousness. This can principally be seen through the cultural aims of Marinetti's journal *Poesia*, an 'international' review that attempted to span the cultural divide between Italy and France, as well as his attempts to place Futurist manifestos in newspapers and magazines across Europe. It may also be seen, to a certain extent, in the Futurist poetics of 'words-in-freedom', a new poetic form that stripped language back to its essential constituents (which involved using verbs only in the infinitive, abolishing the use of adjectives and adverbs, and eradicating syntax), and introduced visual components such as typography, mathematical symbols, and musical notation, and employed onomatopoeic effects. The visually 'iconic' dimensions of this practice came closer to a universal language than any other contemporary poetic form.⁵⁴ However, in Marinetti's attempts to generate a 'Futurist' community based on a new cultural engagement with modernity and national aggrandisement there is a desire to impose on individuals the new Futurist programme, and an attempt to exert control over space. To a certain extent, therefore, Futurist cosmopolitanism is always belied by nationalist and even imperialist intentions.

⁵³ Jane Chapman, 'Transnational Connections and the Comparative Approach', *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 26, no. 1–2 (January–December 2016), 19–38 (p. 24).

⁵⁴ On the iconic dimensions of Futurist poetry see particularly White, *Literary Futurism*, pp. 8–72.

II. Futurism and European Fields of Cultural Production

Futurism's culturally cosmopolitan tendencies, and in particular how these are underpinned by nationalist concerns, are best understood in the context of Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production. In Bourdieu's theory, the cultural field is a site of struggle between dominant and dominated forces, in which certain groups fight to ensure that the field is structured in such a way as to maintain their dominant position, while others fight to gain cultural capital in order to become dominant in the field. In the field of restricted production, this opposition is formed between the established literary tradition and the dissenting, emergent voices of new forms of cultural practice: in other words, between the 'consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e. between artistic generations, often only a few years apart, between the "young" and the "old", [...] in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy'.⁵⁵ Futurism, as an emergent avant-garde movement, must be understood as a dominated literary group in the field of restricted production, which issues a heretical challenge to the cultural orthodoxy. This challenge, which is a political struggle over the 'legitimate vision of reality', is encapsulated by the manifesto, which announces the establishment of a new force in the cultural field, and, accordingly, what does not deserve to be preserved, and what new things should be celebrated.⁵⁶

But dominated by whom? It is significant that, for the Futurists, the 'consecrated' avant-garde was principally understood to be the French Symbolist and Decadent poets rather than, for example, the Italian Scapigliatura poets, or even the Decadent Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), who is nevertheless subjected to extreme censure in a number of early Futurist texts. The Futurists'

⁵⁵ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

manifesto ‘We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon’, which was first published in *Le Futurisme* (1911), explicitly sets out their antipathy towards their ‘glorious intellectual forefathers’ — Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine.⁵⁷ It speaks to the degree of the internationalisation of the Italian field of cultural production in the early twentieth century that these poets are considered to be the literary tradition against which the Futurists were to assert themselves. In contrast to these literary forefathers, the Futurists rejected the passion for the past and the eternal work of art, privileging instead the transitory and fleeting, as well as a more aggressive and youthful masculinity that emphasised the modernity of the Futurist project.

A potential objection to using Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field in relation to Futurism’s transnational approach to cultural production is the ostensible ‘methodological nationalism’ of field theory.⁵⁸ However, despite restricting his analysis to the cultural field in France, Bourdieu does not state that fields are only ever constituted within the borders of the nation. This is not to argue, of course, for the existence of one pan-European cultural field, but rather that national cultural fields overlap and engage with each other, and may be considered, to a certain extent, hierarchical. This relational approach to cultural fields does not negate the structural opposition of positions theorised by Bourdieu: in fact, it enhances the ways in which agents’ position-takings develop according to internal conflicts in the field. Moreover, in the cultural field in particular, geographical borders are more permeable than in

⁵⁷ F. T. Marinetti, ‘We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon’ [1911], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 93–95 (p. 93).

⁵⁸ The term ‘methodological nationalism’ describes an intellectual orientation that tends to interpret issues from the perspective of the nation state, which is conceived as the ‘natural social and political form of the modern world’. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, ‘Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences’, *Global Networks*, vol. 2, no. 4 (October 2002), 301–34 (p. 301), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00043>>. See also: Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), pp. 24–32. On Bourdieu’s methodological nationalism, see Wimmer and Schiller, ‘Methodological Nationalism and Beyond’, p. 304.

other fields: Bourdieu acknowledges that the ‘diffusion of cultural works’ means that ‘things that are very far away in the geographic space can be very close in the relevant space of the field’.⁵⁹ Cultural fields existing within nation states may therefore be formed as a result of exchanges with other national cultural fields, and this is particularly true of Italy’s cultural field at the turn of the century, which existed in close connection with France. The French sociologist and cultural historian Gisele Sapiro has recently argued in favour of using Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field in a transnational context, and has theorised why ‘dominated’ national cultural fields in particular may turn towards international modes of production. She argues:

The more a national field occupies a dominated position in the international space, the more the dominants in this field tend to occupy positions turned toward the international, [...] and would be in return capable of imposing models imported to their country from abroad (because of the prestige attached to the international). Conversely, the more a national field occupies a dominant position in the international space [...] the more the dominants concentrate on the accumulation of specific capital at the national level — which furthermore suffices or almost suffices to ensure them an international visibility because of the capacity of dominant fields to radiate beyond their borders.⁶⁰

The Futurists’ concentration on international prestige may certainly be attributed to the ‘dominated’ position of Italy at the turn of the century in the international cultural space. Gentile has argued, more generally, that for Italians in the period, France was a ‘second spiritual homeland’ that offered a glimpse into the kind of country Italy could be, on a cultural, political, and social level.⁶¹ In the cultural sphere more specifically, however, Paris held the reputation of being the denationalised capital of the literary world.⁶² This intellectual primacy was principally

⁵⁹ Quoted in Gisèle Sapiro, ‘Field Theory from a Transnational Perspective’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, ed. by Thomas Medevetz and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 161–82 (p. 162).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁶¹ Gentile, ‘The Struggle for Modernity’, p. 507.

⁶² See Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, pp. 26–34 and p. 108. Paul Wood has also described Paris as the ‘undisputed cultural capital of the nineteenth century’, and a ‘cultural centre that drew all forms of ambitious practice towards it’; a status that he argues was contested only by Berlin and

due to the fact that France was a significantly longer established country than Italy. The relatively early standardisation of the French language (after the Revolution) had been a practical necessity that ensured society could communicate on a national, rather than just a regional, level: French became a powerful symbol of national identity in a way that Italian was not.⁶³ According to Carlo Ruzza, Italian ‘served as a weak marker of cultural heritage’ in the period following the Risorgimento, with the drive to adopt a single national language largely and ineffectively propelled by intellectual and political elites, whose primary motivation was opposition to foreign occupation and rule.⁶⁴ But the fact that French had been standardised, refined, and disseminated in material form long before Italian also, more importantly, gave it significant advantages in terms of international use. The age of a national language determines its cultural capital because, as Casanova argues, it implies a longer nationhood, which means more capital and involvement in defining what is modern: thus, ‘*it is necessary to be old in order to have any chance of being modern or of decreeing what is modern*’.⁶⁵ This, as well as the reputation of French as a cultured and refined language, meant that it was adopted as the lingua franca of educated Europe, above all with regards to literature and the arts. Literary value, Casanova writes, ‘attaches to certain languages, along with purely literary effects [...] that cannot be reduced to the strictly linguistic capital possessed by a particular language’: the literary heritage of a language ‘is linked also to a set of techniques devised over the course of centuries — poetical and narrative forms and constraints, the results of

Moscow in 1914. Paul Wood, ‘The Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century’, in *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Paul Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 183–203 (p. 184).

⁶³ It has been estimated that in 1861 between only 2.5 per cent and 10 per cent of Italy’s population could speak standard Italian. See Anna Laura Lepschy, Giulio Lepschy, and Miriam Voghera, ‘Linguistic Variety in Italy’, in *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics*, ed. by Carl Levy (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 69–80 (p. 74).

⁶⁴ Carlo Ruzza, ‘Language and Nationalism in Italy: Language as a Weak Marker of Identity’, in *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, ed. by Cathie Carmichael and Stephen Barbour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 168–82 (p. 173).

⁶⁵ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 89. Original emphasis.

formal investigations, theoretical debates, and stylistic innovations — that enrich its range of possibilities’.⁶⁶ Non-French authors writing in other European languages attempted to import French qualities into their own national language, and it is also for this reason that so many foreign writers and intellectuals immigrated to Paris, increasing its reputation as a cosmopolitan capital. However, this should not obscure the fact that France used its reputation as the denationalised capital of culture to promote itself nationally in a method that Bourdieu has termed an ‘imperialism of the universal’.⁶⁷ Literary capital, and even the use of a language as a *lingua franca*, remains in the national interest: it reifies national importance and consolidates its currency.

As such, international cultural production was perceived as a sign of progress that both developed and reflected national consciousness, and was at once cause and effect of a modern nation. In order to increase the prestige of Italian literature, it was necessary for the Futurists to gain cultural legitimacy in France, the dominant cultural field. For Bourdieu, agents vie for cultural legitimacy, which is determined by ‘the degree of recognition accorded by those who recognise no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognise’.⁶⁸ Intellectual or cultural legitimacy is conferred by those who have already obtained legitimacy in the field and who have the power to ‘impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer’.⁶⁹ Thus, before the founding of Futurism, the movement’s protagonists attempted to gain prestige in the French cultural field. Gino Severini called Paris ‘the cradle of nearly all modern avant-garde art’ when he began to work there in 1906, and

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Deux impérialismes de l’universel’, in *L’Amérique des Français*, ed. by Christine Fauré and Tom Bishop (Paris: François Bourin, 1992), pp. 149–55.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

argued the need for Italian intellectuals and artists to work there in order to expel traces of ‘that Italian provincial view from which Italians staying on their native soil hardly ever manage to entirely divest themselves’.⁷⁰ Marinetti was also highly critical of Italian literature before 1909: in an article in the French Symbolist journal *La Vogue*, he writes that Italian poetry ‘apparaît au regard de l’observateur le plus ingénue, absolument indépendante de l’esprit moderne’ [appears even to the most naïve observer independent of the modern spirit], and was ‘dédaigneuse des recherches haletantes où s’enfièvre l’âme de notre siècle’ [scornful of the breathless research that inflames the soul of our century].⁷¹ As such, his early cultural position-taking involved the gain of cultural capital through an adherence to the dominant literary style of Paris, where he also lived:⁷² his poetry collections *La Conquête des Étoiles* [The Conquest of the Stars] (1902) and *Destruction* (1904) were written in French in the Symbolist mode, and he enthusiastically championed the work of the French Symbolists Alfred Jarry and Gustave Kahn.⁷³ As Günter Berghaus has written, Marinetti regarded the ‘expressive range of the Italian language as inadequate at present for communicating the concerns of the modern age’.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he translated the work of Italian poets, such as Giosuè Carducci and Giovanni Pascoli, into French, which were published in the Parisian review *Vers et Prose* (1905–1914).⁷⁵ His principal concern, however, was bringing modern French poetry to an Italian readership (alongside contemporary Italian verse) through his journal *Poesia*, an ‘international review’ (and thus not specifically directed at the Italian cultural

⁷⁰ Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini*, trans. by Jennifer Franchina (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 36 and p. 39.

⁷¹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Le mouvement poétique en Italie’, *La Vogue*, vol. 2, no. 4 (April 1889), pp. 61–66 (p. 61). My translation.

⁷² Marinetti lived in Paris from 1894 to 1902, after which he moved to Milan.

⁷³ Kahn was also a mentor to the young Marinetti, after awarding him first prize in a French national poetry competition in 1898. See Günter Berghaus, *The Genesis of Futurism: Marinetti’s Early Career and Writings 1899–1909* (Leeds: The Society for Italian Studies, 1995), p. 6 and p. 36.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, p. 69.

field) that he had established in Milan in 1905.⁷⁶ Marinetti's role as translator of Italian works into French in these years was undoubtedly undertaken with the aim to help Italian literature develop into modern forms and to increase its international cultural prestige, or cultural legitimacy. However, by importing French works into Italy he conversely contributed to the growth of France's literary heritage, which already held a significant measure of consecration.⁷⁷ In other words, his actions had the perhaps unintended effect of creating additional value and ascribing consecration not to Italian literature, but instead to French literature. Marinetti enhanced his reputation as a Franco-Italian poet through this role, but ultimately did little to challenge the notion of Paris at the centre of literary world.⁷⁸

Marinetti's challenge to the dominant French cultural field from Italy with the first Futurist manifesto is usually viewed as a radical volte-face from his previous position, in which he had adhered to the dominant literary tradition and accepted the cultural hegemony of Paris. Rather than attempt to gain symbolic recognition within the dominant part of the cultural field in France, the Futurists issued a challenge to the consecrated tradition from Italy. Futurism's heretical challenge does not, however, necessarily mean that Marinetti completely abandoned his position in the liminal space between the Italian and French literary fields, although some critics have interpreted this move largely as a repudiation of an internationalist orientation for a nationalist one. Harsha Ram, for example, has identified Futurism's recourse to the

⁷⁶ French poets published in the first issue of *Poesia* alone include Paul Adam, Gustave Kahn, the Comtesse de Noailles, Henri de Régnier, and Rachilde. F. T. Marinetti, ed., *Poesia*, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1905), pp. 4–14.

⁷⁷ As Casanova has argued, translation is 'a process of establishing value'. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ For other assessments of Marinetti's success in his role as cultural mediator in *Poesia*, which particularly concerns Marinetti's enquiries, see Luca Somigli, 'Towards a Literary Modernity all'italiana: A Note on F. T. Marinetti's *Poesia*', in *The Printed Media in Fin-de-Siècle Italy: Publishers, Writers, and Readers*, ed. by Ann Hallamore Caesar, Gabriella Romani, and Jennifer Burns (London: Legenda, 2011), pp. 79–88. For more on Marinetti's enquiries in *Poesia* see Claudia Salaris, *Marinetti editore* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), pp. 55–93.

Italian cities of Milan and Florence — generative spaces that had the potential to become cultural capitals — as symptomatic of modernism’s ‘second spatial turn’.⁷⁹ He argues that if modernism’s initial orientation ‘was generally centripetal, a gravitation toward metropolitan modernity as embodied by the core nations and cities of Europe, then international futurism pursued a secondary movement that might be seen as a return to the periphery’.⁸⁰ Ram uses world-systems theory to contextualise his approach, situating Italy in relation to the ‘core’ European nations of France, Germany, and Britain. Italy’s global status was that of a ‘semiperipheral’ nation at the beginning of the twentieth century: while located close to the ‘core’ nations, Italy was not core itself, and although it was often viewed as ‘backwards’ in this urban, industrial model, it was also not geographically removed enough from the core nations to develop an alternative scale of evaluation.⁸¹ Ram’s interpretation is useful for the geopolitical theory it brings to bear on studies of Futurism, but this theory also tends to simplify Futurism’s spatial trajectory in its initial years. Futurism’s protagonists did not simply pursue one movement towards Paris before the genesis of the movement, and one movement back to Italy with the foundation of the movement.⁸² Instead, Futurism must be understood to enact a series of movements both to and from the centre. It was not just that the Futurists continued to recognise Paris as the centre of the literary world, but that the movement must be seen, to a certain extent, to have had its genesis in France, since its defining announcement — the first manifesto — was published in a French newspaper, and was written in

⁷⁹ Harsha Ram, ‘Futurist Geographies: Uneven Modernities and the Struggle for Aesthetic Autonomy: Paris, Italy, Russia, 1909–1914’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 313–40 (p. 315).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 315–16.

⁸¹ Ram argues that this ‘semiperipheral’ status was also held by Russia, where a parallel, although independent, Futurist movement emerged. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁸² This is also the view of Christine Poggi, who has argued that despite the first manifesto’s publication in *Le Figaro*, Futurism was ‘effectively born in Milan; this was Marinetti’s center of operations before the First World War and home to many of the earliest artists to join’. See Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, p. 78.

French, as were all Marinetti's texts until 1912.⁸³ To this extent it is also significant that when the subsequent publication of the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' appeared in *Poesia* in the February–March 1909 issue, it was printed *first* in French, and only subsequently in Italian.⁸⁴ It was perhaps an odd choice to insist, in an Italian journal and from an insistent Italian movement, that Italians read first in French that: 'C'est en Italie que nous lançons ce manifeste de violence culbutante et incendiaire'.⁸⁵ In the following issue of April–July 1909, another Futurist text, 'Chant Futuriste' [Futurist song], was printed in French. In the same issue, an Italian-language text featured — Marinetti's 'La Morte presse il volante' [Death presses the steering wheel] — but even this was stated to be 'Trad. Dell'Autore', and thus made explicit that the original language of the text was French.⁸⁶

The performative dimensions of Futurism, as a heretical avant-garde movement, often obscure its emergence within the dominant pole of the cultural field it professed to abjure. However, Marinetti's play *Le Roi Bombance*, a satirical tragedy heavily influenced by Jarry, was staged at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris from 3 April 1909 — six weeks after the revolutionary first Futurist manifesto was published in *Le Figaro*.⁸⁷ Commenting on the first official Futurist exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris in 1912, Severini writes that at a time when 'the quality of art in Italy was at an all-time low', the Futurists 'used every possible means to update their

⁸³ Pasquale Jannini has argued: 'Tra il 1894 e il 1912 F. T. Marinetti si volle e fu scrittore francese' [Between 1894 and 1912 F. T. Marinetti wanted to be and became a French writer]. Pasquale Jannini, *Scritti francese* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), p. 7. My translation. 1894 was the date that Marinetti published his first journal, *Le Papyrus: Revue bi-mensuelle littéraire, artistique, fantaisiste et mondaine*, which was written in French and appeared in twenty-one issues between February 1894 and February 1895. See Marjorie G. Wynne and Luce Marinetti, 'F. T. Marinetti and Futurism', *The Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 57, no. 3–4 (April 1983), 104–37 (p. 111).

⁸⁴ F. T. Marinetti, 'Fondation et Manifeste du Futurisme', *Poesia*, vol. 5, no. 1–2 (February–March 1909), pp. 1–4; F. T. Marinetti, 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo', *Poesia*, vol. 5, no. 1–2 (February–March 1909), pp. 5–8.

⁸⁵ Marinetti, 'Fondation et Manifeste du Futurisme', *Poesia*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ F. T. Marinetti, 'La Morte presse il volante', *Poesia*, vol. 5, no. 3–6 (April–July 1909), pp. 70–71 (p. 71).

⁸⁷ See Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, p. 69. *Les Peintres futuristes italiens* displayed 34 Futurist works from 5 February to 24 February 1912.

knowledge of European artistic activity as it was manifested in Paris', even as they appeared as 'challengers and antagonists'.⁸⁸ And notably, in a letter to the Futurist musician Francesco Balilla Pratella, Marinetti reveals that the acceptance of Futurism in Paris was of vital importance to the movement: he stated that in order to 'win over Paris and appear, in the eyes of all Europe, an absolute innovator, [...] I urge you to get to work with all your heart, resolute on being bolder, crazier, more advanced, surprising, eccentric, incomprehensible, and grotesque than anybody else in music'.⁸⁹ The Futurists looked to Paris as a centre of culture that, by necessity, had to be embraced in order for them to be taken seriously as a cultural movement. Emerging simultaneously with and against the cultural field in France, Futurism was an antagonistic force that nevertheless remained tied to the dominant cultural tradition.

However, the movement also attempted to establish itself in multiple countries, publishing the first manifesto in other European countries and also writing manifestos that specifically targeted the *passéisme* of specific national cultural fields. In part this was a response to the fact that the cultural field in France was not receptive to the Futurist programme, largely because it already had a number of avant-garde movements, particularly in the visual arts, such as Cubism. But it also had the effect of attempting to balance the uneven distribution of aesthetic modernity in Europe. The Futurists' attempts to penetrate the cultural field in England can be explained by the fact that unlike France, England was a relatively marginal force in literary and artistic currents in the pre-war period: Roberto Baronti Marchiò has described England in 1910 as 'a country which was notoriously insensitive to avant-garde art'.⁹⁰ It was because of this lack of existing avant-garde groups that the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁹ F. T. Marinetti to Francesco Balilla Pratella, quoted in Rainey, 'Introduction: F. T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism', p. 4.

⁹⁰ Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', p. 100 and p. 102.

Futurists could position themselves as heretical challengers to the dominant cultural tradition.

III: Establishing Futurism in England

In Futurism's initial years, from 1909 to 1911, the movement did not attempt to gain much traction in England. The first Futurist manifesto had been translated into English in the April–July 1909 issue of *Poesia*, which was distributed at four London bookshops:⁹¹ Hatchard & Co. at 187 Piccadilly; Hachette & Co. at 18 King William Street; J. & E. Bumpus on 350 Oxford Street; and 'Lawley & Co.' (possibly Lamley & Co, of 1–7 Exhibition Road).⁹² Excepting the publication in *Poesia*, however, Futurist literature did not appear in print in English until August 1910, when the first manifesto and 'Futurist Venice' were published in Douglas Goldring's short-lived journal *The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine* (1910–1911).⁹³ The Futurists' first address to be delivered outside Italy was the 'Futurist Speech to the English' in December 1910, which was delivered to the Lyceum Club at 122 Piccadilly.⁹⁴ From

⁹¹ F. T. Marinetti, 'Declaration of Futurism', *Poesia*, vol. 5, no. 3–6 (April–July 1909), pp. 1–2. This text did not include the 'Founding' section, describing Marinetti's car crash.

⁹² It was stated on the back covers of *Poesia* in its first volume that the magazine was sold at these four London booksellers. Although this list does not appear after the first volume, it seems likely that *Poesia* continued to be sold at the same locations. See, for example, *Poesia*, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1905), n. p. [p. 20]. See also 'Hatchard & Co.', 1914 *Who's Who in Business* <https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1914_Who's_Who_in_Business:_Company_H> [accessed 25 June 2019]; 'Hachette & Company', 1914 *Who's Who in Business* <https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1914_Who's_Who_in_Business:_Company_H> [accessed 25 June 2019]; 'Bumpus, John and Edward, Ltd.', <https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1914_Who's_Who_in_Business:_Company_B> [accessed 25 June 2019]; for Lamley & Co. see James Clegg, ed., *The International Directory of Booksellers and Bibliophile's Manual*, 9th edn (Rochdale: J. Clegg, 1914), p. 51.

⁹³ 'Futurism', *The Tramp*, vol. 1, no. 6 (August 1910), pp. 487–88.

⁹⁴ It has been a point of contention in Futurist criticism as to whether the Futurists first visited London in April or December 1910. However, as Somigli and Jamie Wood have both demonstrated, the latter date is more likely given the complete absence of press reports at the time of the first supposed visit. Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 168; Jamie Wood, "On or about December 1910": F. T. Marinetti's Onslaught on London and Recursive Structures in Modernism', *Modernist Cultures*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2015), 135–58 (pp. 137–38). Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman also identify

1912, however, the Futurists were certainly attempting to establish a foothold in England, above all in the visual arts because none of the Futurists spoke any English. The ‘Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters’ was held at the Sackville Gallery from 1 to 20 March 1912, Severini gave a solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in April and May 1913, and from 26 April 1914 the ‘Exhibition of the Works of the Italian Futurist Painters and Sculptors’ was held at the Doré Gallery at 35 New Bond Street. London was intended to form a new centre of culture that could help to balance the uneven distribution of modernity in Europe: thus, they attempted to claim London as a hub of Futurist activity, which would render their movement truly international.

London was a significant city in the development of the Futurist aesthetic.⁹⁵ Marinetti claimed in an interview with the *London Daily News* that ‘London is a “Futurist” city, insomuch that nowhere can you find such a colossal display of energy and, in certain circles, so ardent a love of novelty and progress’.⁹⁶ Writing to Marinetti from London during his solo exhibition, Severini declared that ‘things are going marvellously well for the time being; every day there are serious articles and reproductions of paintings’.⁹⁷ In the *Daily Express*, he stated that ‘London is a city where movement and order reign [...] Motor-omnibuses passing and re-passing rapidly in the crowded streets, covered with letters — red, green, white — are far more beautiful to look at than the canvases of Leonardo or Titian’.⁹⁸ In reality, the extent to which Futurism dominated London in these years is much less than

December 1910 as the date of ‘Futurist Speech to the English’. See Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology*, p. 70 and p. 527.

⁹⁵ John J. White, ‘London’, in *Futurism: A Microhistory*, ed. by Bru, Somigli and Van Den Bossche, pp. 59–68 (p. 59).

⁹⁶ ‘London a City of Futurists’, *London Daily News*, 7 March 1912, p. 5.

⁹⁷ Gino Severini to F. T. Marinetti, 19 April 1913, quoted in Anne Coffin Hanson, *Severini futurista: 1912–1917* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), p. 149.

⁹⁸ Gino Severini, ‘Get Inside the Picture: Futurism as the Artist Sees It’, *The Daily Express*, 11 April 1913, p. 4.

Marinetti claimed: while he wrote that over 350 press reviews had been written on the Sackville Gallery exhibition, the truth was closer to fifty.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, it is accurate to say, as Marchiò argues, that England had no truly avant-garde movement to speak of either in literature or the visual arts at the time the Futurists first visited in 1910. The New English Art Club had attempted, from 1885, to introduce Impressionist art to England, but by 1905 this group was largely inactive. Roger Fry's famous 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' exhibition, which had showed at the Grafton Galleries from 8 November 1910 to 11 January 1911, had been panned mercilessly by critics, practically destroying Fry's reputation.¹⁰⁰ The general response had seemed to highlight the English public's unwillingness to engage with the new directions in art that were emerging from the continent: the exhibition was described as a 'widespread plot to destroy the whole fabric of European painting' in the *Morning Post*, and 'paint run mad' in the *Daily Express*, while the *Tatler* ran with the headline 'Anarchy in High Art' on 23 November 1910.¹⁰¹ It seems strange, perhaps, that Marinetti did not attempt to contact Fry during the exhibition or at any time during the period in which the Futurists were in England: however, this is perhaps due to the fact that Fry's principal interest was modern French art, and that the Bloomsbury aesthetic with which Fry was chiefly associated was sufficiently opposed to Futurism's radical, political-cultural programme.

⁹⁹ See F. T. Marinetti to Francesco Balilla Pratella, 12 April 1912, in *Archivi del Futurismo*, ed. by Gambillo and Fiori, I, pp. 237–39 (p. 237). Valerio Gioè has identified forty-six articles about the Sackville Gallery exhibition. However, she omits a number of articles and magazines, such as Gladys Jones, 'The Futurists', *The Freewoman*, vol. 1, no. 25 (9 May 1912), p. 498 (p. 498). Valerio Gioè, 'Futurism in England: A Bibliography (1910–1915)', in *Bulletin of Bibliography*, vol. 44, no. 3 (September 1987), 172–88 (pp. 175–76).

¹⁰⁰ For as complete a list as possible of the works exhibited at 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' and their provenance, see Anna Gruetzner Robins, "'Manet and the Post-Impressionists': A Checklist of Exhibits", *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 152, no. 1293 (December 2010), 782–93.

¹⁰¹ Robert Ross, 'The Post-Impressionists at the Grafton: The Twilight of the Idols', *Morning Post*, 7 December 1910, p. 3; 'Paint Run Mad: Post-Impressionists at Grafton Galleries', *Daily Express*, 9 November 1910, p. 8; 'Anarchy in High Art', *The Tatler* (23 November 1910), p. 228 (p. 228).

Despite Futurism's conspicuous presence in London in the years before the First World War, literary critics have been largely quick to dismiss any significant influence on English cultural figures, and tend to highlight the contemptuous responses of the English public to the movement. Jamie Wood has written that 'Marinetti's comparative marketing successes in France, Germany and Spain during 1909 and 1910 had been met with a mostly satirical response in England', citing various newspaper articles that ridiculed the Futurists' attempts to establish their movement in London.¹⁰² Particularly highlighted by Wood is the response of the English essayist and caricaturist Max Beerbohm, who complained that 'there is no future for the Future' in the world of 'silly Signor Marinetti', and the *Daily Mirror's* 'satirical assessment' of Futurism as 'both brutal and silly' in the summer of 1910.¹⁰³ Luca Somigli also argues that the 'generally negative responses to the Italian movement took the form either of the often amused and sceptically ironic (and at times even parodic) journalistic report, or of the critical investigation of the formal aspects of futurist painting'.¹⁰⁴ It is true that numerous reporters adopted a scathing approach to the movement. G. K. Chesterton, writing in the *London Daily News* in November 1909, quipped that: 'If you ask me what Futurism is, I cannot tell you; even the Futurists themselves seem a little doubtful; perhaps they are waiting for the future to find out'.¹⁰⁵ Other articles attacked the noisy polemics of Futurism's manifestos, in particular their impetuous announcements of great works of literature and art that, as critics wryly noted, were still yet to appear. The Paris correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* questioned: 'Why do not the futurists write their poems about

¹⁰² Wood, "'On or about December 1910'", p. 143.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁵ G. K. Chesterton, 'The Futurists', *The London Daily News*, 13 November 1909, p. 4.

railway trains and aeroplanes, their sermons in steam engines, and books in racing motor-cars, instead of telling us they mean to write them?'¹⁰⁶

A great number of articles seemed, however, to take Futurism's programme with no small measure of concern for the extremist political tenor of the movement. Futurism's members were branded as 'art anarchists' in the *Daily Express*, while *The Times* declared that '[w]hatever element of truth may underlie doctrines deprecating an excessive veneration for the past the anarchical extravagances of the Futurists must deprive the movement of the sympathy of all reasonable men'.¹⁰⁷ Of course, such claims were not entirely without foundation, since early Futurist ideas were indebted to anarchism and Marinetti was involved with anarchist-syndicalist groups in Italy.¹⁰⁸ The Futurists' subversive political views were not to escape the British public: the 'destructive gesture of anarchists' phrase from the first manifesto was quoted in Chesterton's article on Futurism in November 1909 (it was, however, omitted from the *Tramp*), and other newspapers reported in the same year on Futurism's glorification of 'destruction' and 'ideas that kill'.¹⁰⁹ The threat of anarchism was a significant concern for the English public in the Edwardian period: a number of violent anarchist attacks on the continent beginning in the 1890s, most notably the Café Terminus bomb and the assassination of the French president Sadi Carnot in 1894, had led to the fear that similar attacks would occur in England (especially because England was home to a number of anarchists seeking refuge from persecution in their home countries, as the Futurists themselves noted).¹¹⁰ There was a particular

¹⁰⁶ 'A New Philosophy,' *Leamington Spa Courier*, 26 February 1909, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Lewis Hind, 'Daily Chronicle', *Daily Express*, 4 March 1912, p. 5, quoted in Black, 'Great Britain', p. 507; 'The Aims of Futurism', *The Times*, 21 March 1912, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Marinetti wrote for anarchist journals such as *La demolizione* and outlined his anarcho-syndicalist views in 'The Beauty and Necessity of Violence'.

¹⁰⁹ Chesterton, 'The Futurists', p. 4; 'A New Philosophy', p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Peter Kropotkin lived in England between 1886 and 1917; Italian anarchist Enrico Malatesta lived in London between 1900 and 1913. See also F. T. Marinetti, 'Futurist Speech to the English' [1910], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 70–74 (p. 71).

association of anarchism with Italy: Carnot had been killed by an Italian national, Sante Geronimo Caserio; the Empress Elisabeth of Austria had been assassinated by the Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni in 1898; and King Umberto I of Italy had been killed by another Italian anarchist, Gaetano Bresci, in 1900. Following the announcement of an Italian anti-anarchist congress — the ‘International Conference of Rome for the Social Defense Against Anarchists’ — in 1898, *The Times* attributed the location of the conference to the reason that the ‘terrible distress among the lower classes in Italy and the unsound economic conditions, combined with mal-administration, have made it a more fruitful field for Anarchism than any other country in Europe’.¹¹¹ By the 1900s, the wave of anarchist attacks had begun to subside, but the publication of Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1907), based in part on the Greenwich bomb attack of 1894, indicates that the threat posed by the political philosophy was still keenly felt.

For the most part, this anxiety of anarchist ‘invasion’ from the Continent fed into the widespread public perception that England was, in many regards, a nation in decline. In the early twentieth century, the concern that Britain had been humiliated in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) had brought back into public debate the question of social decline: many were confounded that the British army, which had for so long shown proof of its superiority by creating and maintaining a global empire, could be so severely challenged by the Boers, a group of farmers who lacked modern military training and equipment. The journalist and eugenicist Arnold White had questioned in 1899 whether Britain still had the ‘racial efficiency’ necessary to defeat the Boers, citing a forty per cent rejection rate for army service in the cities.¹¹² The 1904 ‘Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration’, produced in

¹¹¹ ‘The Repression of Anarchism’, *The Times*, 18 October 1898, p. 5.

¹¹² Arnold White, ‘The Cult of Infirmary’, *National Review*, no. 34 (October 1899), pp. 236–45 (p. 239 and p. 241).

response to a document by the Director General of the Army Medical Services that claimed recruitment for the Boer War was being impeded by the lack of physically adequate men, stated that ‘it is a most disturbing fact that from 40 to 60 per cent of the men who present themselves for enlistment are found to be physically unfit for military service’.¹¹³ The report was subsequently referenced in Elliott E. Mills’s histrionic, speculative text *Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1905), the title and content of which was inspired by Edward Gibbon’s influential, multivolume study *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1766–1788). Combining the findings of the report with more generalised assertions of the decreasing height and chest measurements of recruits, Mills’s argument spoke to many who identified poor living conditions among the working classes with intellectual, moral, and physical degeneration, to which hereditary transmission would spell the eventual destruction of the British Empire.¹¹⁴ Individual body decline was widely understood to be symptomatic of national progress, and when the British were compared, as Richard Soloway has written, to ‘the healthier, more efficient Germans, not to mention lesser breeds such as the Boers, Belgians, and Japanese, it seemed obvious that the race was not what it had been’.¹¹⁵

The outcome of the Boer War was not the only outward sign of social degeneration in England, however. It was evident to contemporary observers, for example, that the inauguration of the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery coincided with a wave of militant suffragette activism. A window-smashing demonstration was held on 1 March 1912 in London’s West End and led by Emmeline Pankhurst, and two smaller campaigns were subsequently held on 4 March

¹¹³ *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1904), 1: *Report and Appendix*, 100. < www.archive.org/details/b21358916 > [accessed 1 May 2019].

¹¹⁴ Elliott E. Mills, *Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Alden & Co., 1905), pp. 19–20.

¹¹⁵ Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 41.

and 7 March.¹¹⁶ Boccioni, and possibly Marinetti, took part in the demonstration on one of these dates.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, between 1910 and 1914 the ‘Labour Unrest’ marked a period of discontent in Britain’s industrial institutions, and involved strikes in the coal, dock, and transport industries. The miners’ strike in 1910 and 1911 had attempted to improve wages and living conditions in south Wales, and culminated in a series of violent confrontations between striking miners and the police in what become known as the Tonypandy riots. The same issues were at the root of the first national coal miners’ strike between February and April 1912, which campaigned to institute a minimum wage. In 1911 there had been a series of major disputes including the National Railway strike, the Llanelli riots, the Liverpool general transport strike, the Bermondsey strike, and the London dock strikes. The issue of Irish home rule, although present since 1870, had become a significant problem in 1912 following the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons: the Ulster Volunteers, a recently formed paramilitary group, threatened to resist the implementation of the act by physical force. Britain appeared to be going through a period of national crisis.¹¹⁸ Much like the Futurists, who identified tourism in Italy as a form of national invasion, a number of English commentators compared the Futurists’ visits to London as an aggressive and unwelcome attack on their national cultural and political institutions.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ See ‘The Suffrage Raid’, *The Times*, 4 March 1912, p. 8; ‘The Suffragist Disorders’, *The Times*, 8 March 1912, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ See Umberto Boccioni to Vico Baer, 15 March 1912, in *Archivi del Futurismo*, ed. by Gambillo and Fiori, II, 42–43 (p. 43); F. T. Marinetti, ‘Suffragettes and Indian Docks’ [n. d.], in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. by Flint, pp. 341–42.

¹¹⁸ For more on London’s ‘Great Unrest’ see George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York: H. Smith and R. Haas, 1935); David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis in Britain, 1901–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

¹¹⁹ For critical analyses that present Futurism in England as an ‘invasion’ see: Giovanni Cianci, ‘Futurism and the English Avant-Garde: The Early Pound Between Imagism and Vorticism’, *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 6, no 1 (1981), 3–39; Wood, “‘On or About December 1910’”, pp. 136–37; Buchowska and Wright, ‘The Futurist Invasion of Great Britain, 1910–1914’, 201–25;

This interpretation was only exacerbated by the Italian state's ongoing ambitions for overseas territory: the Italian invasion of the Turkish province of Libya in 1911, which resulted in the establishment of Italian Libya in November of that year, was widely condemned in the English press. The most prominent articles to appear on the subject were written by the journalist Francis McCullagh, which forcefully accused the Italian army of war crimes and criticised the *Giornale d'Italia* newspaper of complicity in the jingoistic fervour.¹²⁰ Marinetti, Boccioni, and the London correspondent of the *Giornale d'Italia* subsequently paid a punitive visit to the journalist. In his later book on the subject, *Italy's War for a Desert* (1912), McCullagh described this meeting and made explicit that he saw the Futurists to be complicit in the war: 'this Italian adventure is an unreal, literary, poetical, journalistic, archæological production. This war is "run" by crazy Futurists and Impressionists'.¹²¹ McCullagh's appendix to the text was also intensely critical of Marinetti and the Futurists, concluding that 'it is only morbid and cowardly degenerates who go into paroxysms of excitement and sing wild pæans when they see an artillerist pointing a cannon at an enemy three miles off and unable to reply'.¹²² Not all English reports on the Italian army's conduct in Libya were so critical.¹²³ Nevertheless, Paul Peppis has argued that, in general, 'English analyses of the Turko-Italian War present the Futurists as active collaborators in Italian imperial policy', an analysis he identifies as correct because both 'projects aimed to extend Italy's influence beyond its borders; the government's war would increase its imperial reach, Futurism's European tours

Gérard Georges Lemaire, 'L'Invasion futuriste de la Grande-Bretagne', in *Futurisme: Littérature et arts plastiques*, ed. by Erik Pesenti (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires, 1997), pp. 51–68.

¹²⁰ Francis McCullagh, 'Tripoli in Barbary, Nov. 2', *London Daily News*, 17 November 1911, pp. 1–2; Francis McCullagh, 'The Truth About Tripoli', *London Daily News*, 18 November 1911, pp. 1–2.

¹²¹ Francis McCullagh, *Italy's War for a Desert* (London: Herbert & Daniel, 1913), pp. xxii–xxiii and p. 171.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 397.

¹²³ See, for example, Romney, 'Military Notes', *The New Age*, vol. 11, no. 10 (4 July 1912), p. 222.

would increase its cultural reach'.¹²⁴ Certainly English writings from the period exhibit a disquiet regarding Italy's imperial ambitions that indicate a more general anxiety for their country's own declining imperial power.

However, during the time of the Sackville Gallery exhibition, English writers and artists — if not necessarily the general public — were also beginning to become more receptive to the Futurist programme. Some reviews expressed enthusiasm for the vitality, and even the virility, of the Futurists.¹²⁵ Fry's response was more circumspect, characterising the Futurists as 'strangely Nihilistic', but even his review did not completely excoriate the movement.¹²⁶ The art critic and activist Frank Rutter decried the sensation-seeking attitude of the British public in his review of the exhibition, and praised the painting *Train at Full Speed* by Luigi Russolo.¹²⁷ And, despite having previously written a damning review of the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery that famously lampooned it as a 'nightmare exhibition',¹²⁸ the art critic P. G. Konody argued in the *Pall Mall Gazette* following a meeting with Marinetti that 'Futurism has, from the moment of its introduction to England, come to be as completely misunderstood and unjustly derided as it has been on the Continent'. He continues:

[Marinetti] turns the hard facts of modern industrial and mechanical progress into poetry of passionate violence, and thus courts misunderstanding. Futurism, as expounded by him, is not an abnormal, eccentric phase of modern art and literature, but the splendid awakening of a new national consciousness. The Futurists have been accused of being mad iconoclasts, who would destroy all artistic relics of the past and evolve a new art based on no hallowed tradition. Nothing could be further from their aim. They worship the masterpieces of past ages, and would not dream of laying violent hands on

¹²⁴ Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 82.

¹²⁵ See Jones, 'The Futurists', p. 498.

¹²⁶ Roger Fry, 'The Futurists', *The Nation* (9 March 1912), pp. 945–46 (p. 945).

¹²⁷ Frank Rutter, 'Round the Galleries: The Futurist Painters', *The Sunday Times*, 10 March 1912, p. 19.

¹²⁸ P. G. Konody, 'The Italian Futurists: Nightmare Exhibition at the Sackville Gallery', *Pall Mall Gazette* (1 March 1912), p. 5 (p. 5).

them. But they love their country better still, and protest against its future being sacrificed to its past.¹²⁹

Why Konody's first review has been so overused in literary criticism is not certain, although it certainly speaks to a more general theory that the Futurists were uniformly dismissed as mediocre artists and second-rate theorists across the country. However, a consideration of his second, more moderate and understanding assessment of the movement, which appears to a certain extent to have been written with the intention of tempering the former review, is vital for a proper understanding of Futurism's reception in England.

The reason for the general shift in views is largely due to the symbolic capital that the Sackville Gallery imparted to the Futurist movement. The exhibition was held as the second leg of the Futurists' touring exhibition, immediately after the exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris. The Bernheim-Jeune was a progressive gallery that was well known for exhibiting contemporary modern and avant-garde art: from 1906, the gallery had exhibited works including those of Fauvist artists such as Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy, as well as the Italian Jewish artist Amedeo Modigliani. The Sackville Gallery, by contrast, specialised in traditional Old Master works. Established in May 1908 by Max Rothschild, the son of the art dealer David Rothschild, and Robert René Meyer-Sée on 28 Sackville Street in Piccadilly (close to the Royal Academy), the gallery promoted itself, as Barbara Pezzini has argued, as a 'conservative operation for the elite' and 'a "sacred" space where works of art were meant to transcend their financial value', thus highlighting the aura of artistic works.¹³⁰ Indeed, unlike other 'progressive' commercial art galleries of the early twentieth century, such as the Carfax Gallery (which was established in 1899 and

¹²⁹ P. G. Konody, 'The Futurists and their Leader', *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 March 1912), pp. 8–9 (p. 8).

¹³⁰ Barbara Pezzini, 'The 1912 Futurist Exhibition at the Sackville Gallery, London: An Avant-Garde Show Within the Old Master Trade', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 155, no. 1324 (July 2013), 471–79 (p. 472 and p. 473).

exhibited the three Camden Town Group shows from 1911 to 1912) and the Leicester Galleries (which was founded in 1903 and was also associated with the Camden Town Group), the Sackville did not seem to hire out their space for group exhibitions.¹³¹ For the Futurists to exhibit their work at such a traditional gallery appears to conflict with their desire to engender the anti-institutionalisation of art, and certainly to their proclamation that they would, every day, ‘spit on the *Altar of Art*’.¹³² However, it may also be understood that it was precisely because they had few contacts in England and needed to use all means at their disposal to gain a foothold in a country where they wanted to forge a reputation. For Bourdieu, the ‘production’ of the work of art in the cultural field is not only due to the producer (the writer or artist) but also to the ‘cultural businessman’ (that is, the art dealer or publisher), who, by putting the product on the market consecrates a product that he has discovered. The art trader is thus a ‘symbolic banker’ who ‘offers as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated’, and this is what brings the producer into the cycle of consecration.¹³³ That Futurism began to be accepted in England in 1912 is almost entirely due to the fact that the cultural businessmen of the Sackville Gallery, Rothschild and Meyer-Sée, could use their not insignificant cultural influence and expertise to ‘consecrate’ the Italian avant-garde in English cultural circles. Moreover, the anti-commercial reputation of the Sackville Gallery was somewhat disingenuous: the Futurist exhibition was theatrically advertised as the ‘latest art sensation’ and illustrated by Boccioni’s painting *Laughter* (1911), a painting that was innocuously described in the exhibition catalogue as a ‘gay’ restaurant scene. This painting would have been more acceptable to middle-class audiences than many of the more political works of the exhibition, such as Carlo Carrà’s *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli*

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 473–74.

¹³² Marinetti, ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’, p. 124. Original emphasis.

¹³³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 76–77.

(1911).¹³⁴ In all, the exhibition was calculated to draw in a large, paying public: in fact, according to Marinetti the gallery managers did not want the Futurists to carry on with their tour to Berlin, and Boccioni stated that the Futurists received a daily stipend of forty to fifty lire a day, a significant amount that was accrued from ticket and catalogue sales.¹³⁵ From the Futurists' perspective, however, even if a number of the press reviews were negative, the antagonistic relationship with the public that was created helped them to cement their image as an avant-garde movement that was, or aimed to be, largely unintelligible to the bourgeois class. This increase of symbolic capital within the English cultural field was only strengthened by Severini's solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in 1913, a gallery that was also owned by Rothschild and managed by Meyer-Sée, who had left the Sackville in August 1912.¹³⁶

'Futurist' subsequently became a term that could be applied to English practitioners, which can be seen most notably with the 'Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition' at the Doré Galleries in October 1913, curated by Rutter. The exhibition featured Camille Pissarro as its starting point, and included a number of artists including Gauguin and Van Gogh, as well as groups such as the Fauvists, Cubists, and the Camden Town Group. But, for an exhibition that had 'Futurist' in its very title, it strangely only featured two strictly Futurist works, *Polka* and *Valse*, both of which were painted by Severini.¹³⁷ While Severini's work certainly found favour

¹³⁴ See advertisement for the Futurist Exhibition at the Sackville Gallery, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 20, no. 108 (March 1912), n.p.; *Exhibition of the Works by the Italian Futurist Painters* (London: Sackville Gallery, 1912), p. 21.

¹³⁵ Marinetti to Pratella, 12 April 1912, in *Archivi del Futurismo*, ed. by Gambillo and Fiori, I, 237; Umberto Boccioni to Nino Barbantini, 13 April 1912, in *Archivi del Futurismo*, ed. by Gambillo and Fiori, II, 44. These facts have also been noted in Pezzini, 'The 1912 Futurist Exhibition at the Sackville Gallery, London', p. 479. Pezzini also analyses the Futurists' daily stipend against the cost of living in Italy.

¹³⁶ Severini's one-man show was received with praise, particularly in the short-lived periodical the *Blue Review*. See O. Raymond Drey, 'The Galleries: Gino Severini', *The Blue Review* (July 1913), pp. 213–14.

¹³⁷ See *Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition /with an Introduction by Frank Rutter, B.A. (Curator of the Leeds City Art Gallery)* (London: Doré Gallery, [1913]).

over any other Futurist visual artist in Britain, it seems something of an oversight to omit works by other central figures of Futurism such as Boccioni, Russolo, Carrà, and Giacomo Balla. However, in his foreword to the exhibition catalogue, Rutter argued: ‘That “cubism” and “futurism” have already stirred English artists is shown by the contributions of Mr. Wyndham Lewis, Mr. Wadsworth, Mr. Nevinson and others’.¹³⁸ While Futurism and Cubism are somewhat conflated in Rutter’s analysis of British artists, it is clear that Rutter styles the three London-based artists as Futurists within the context of the exhibition, which featured nine works by Lewis, five by Edward Wadsworth, and six by C. R. W. Nevinson, one of whose paintings, *The Departure of the Train De Luxe* (1913), Rutter later named ‘the first English Futurist picture’.¹³⁹

On what level was Futurism engaged with in England, then? Konody’s positive response to the Futurist programme, while perplexing given his previous adamant criticism of the formal qualities of Futurist paintings, stems from his sympathy for its political nationalism, an ‘essentially noble and patriotic thought’, at the root of which was Italy’s prostration before the foreign tourist.¹⁴⁰ In his article, the Futurists are portrayed as far less violent than their manifestos suggest; their call to burn down museums and libraries is re-interpreted as a symbolic manifestation of their desire to be rid of an encumbering past that hindered future development. In a similar vein, the painter Walter Sickert wrote his article ‘The Futurist devil-among-the-tailors’, published in Ford Madox Ford’s *The English Review* in April 1912, as a response to the *Morning Post*’s rumoured rejection of a review on the Futurist

¹³⁸ Frank Rutter, ‘Foreword’, in *Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition* (London: Doré Gallery, [1913]), pp. 1–5 (p. 5).

¹³⁹ Frank Rutter, *Art in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1933), p. 150.

¹⁴⁰ Konody, ‘The Futurists and their Leader’, p. 8.

exhibition, on the basis of the perceived ‘immorality’ of the new movement.¹⁴¹ He argued:

One thing the Futurist movement certainly is not, and that is, immoral. Austere, bracing, patriotic, nationalist, positive, anti-archaistic, anti-sentimental, anti-feminist, what Prudhon [*sic*] calls anti-pornocratic, the movement is one from which we in England have a good deal to learn. This is not to say that we are to accept the manifestos in their literal entirety [...] language in Italy is a far more florid and coloured thing than with us. [...] The idea at the root of the Futurist movement is health itself. It would teach us that a healthy intellectual life, a healthy political life, is based on active concern with the present and the future, and not on hypnotism by the past.¹⁴²

As with Konody’s reference to Futurism’s ‘poetry of passionate violence’ that ‘courts misunderstanding’, Sickert’s description of Futurism’s ‘florid’, perhaps exaggerative language that was not to be taken in its ‘literal entirety’ rejects the notion of a Futurist threat to British culture. However, this does not imply that Sickert does not recognise Futurism’s radical leanings. While Konody rejects styling the Futurists as ‘iconoclasts’, Sickert’s reference to Pierre Joseph Proudhon, one of anarchism’s most influential theorists, acknowledges their subversive and nonconformist intellectual heritage. Sickert’s claim that the English had ‘a good deal to learn’ from their Italian counterparts stems from their revolutionary attitude: a desire to propagate a new direction in literature and art that engaged with the modern world, which would effect a vigorous, revitalising function on English culture.

The Futurist’s emphasis on life was, as has been argued in the introduction to this thesis, the cornerstone of the movement’s aesthetic and political vision, and it was largely on this basis that they attempted to integrate themselves in English culture, because, of course, any emphasis on Italian hegemony was unlikely to render it a

¹⁴¹ The ‘devil-among-the-tailors’ refers to either a children’s game, or, more likely, a type of firework of English origin. It is thus a metaphor that reflects the ‘explosive’ nature of the Futurist aesthetic programme in the English cultural milieu.

¹⁴² Walter Sickert, ‘The Futurist “Devil-Among-the-Tailors”’, in *Walter Sickert: The Complete Writings on Art*, ed. by Anna Gruetzner Robins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 304–10 (p. 305).

sympathetic movement. On one level, this emerged from their impetus to promote national health and power by encouraging a ‘cleansing’ of the body politic. War, expressed as ‘the only hygiene of the world’, was the most prominent aspect of this, but it is important to note that Futurism also encouraged the cultivation of individual bodies, which, taken together, constituted the health of the nation. Thus, in his ‘Futurist Speech to the English’, Marinetti praised the English not only for their ‘indomitable and bellicose patriotism’, but also because they had ‘invented the love of hygiene, the adoration of muscles, a harsh taste for effort, all of which triumph in your beautiful sporting life’.¹⁴³ The English ‘passion for struggle’, as the Futurists saw it, was encapsulated in their love of boxing, but also in the ‘monstrous roaring necks of the cannon on the decks of your dreadnoughts, crouched in their swivelling caves of steel’.¹⁴⁴ The dreadnought was also exalted in Marinetti’s ‘Geometrical and Mechanical Splendour in Words at Liberty’, which was published in the *New Age* in 1914. Although Italy had three dreadnought ships by May of that year, Marinetti was very likely to have been aware that the English public would have identified the battleship with English national power.¹⁴⁵ Futurism could thus be associated with English industry just as much as Italian industry, and its rhetoric played into a language of renewed imperialism and conquest.

Most importantly, however, Futurism’s health-giving properties worked at the level of its effect on literature and art. In the ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist

¹⁴³ Marinetti, ‘Futurist Speech to the English’, p. 71 and p. 73.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁴⁵ In the manifesto, Marinetti’s Futurist sense of ‘geometrical splendour’ is realised while standing ‘on the bridge of a dreadnought’. Italy’s first dreadnought ship, the *Dante Alighieri*, had been completed in January 1913; two subsequent dreadnoughts, the *Giulio Cesare* and the *Leonardo Da Vinci*, were both commissioned in May 1914. But the battleship was most associated with English industry, since the world’s first dreadnought ship, the British Royal Navy’s *HMS Dreadnought*, had been completed in 1906, and Britain had twenty-nine dreadnoughts by 1914. F. T. Marinetti, ‘Geometric and Mechanical Splendour in Words at Liberty’, trans. by Arundel Del Re, *The New Age*, vol. 15. no. 1 (7 May 1914), pp. 16–17 (p. 16); Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 85; Randal Gray, ed., *Conway’s All the World’s Fighting Ships, 1906–1921* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1985), p. 259.

Literature' (1912), Marinetti had argued that just as 'microbes are necessary for the health of the stomach and the intestines' there is also 'a species of microbes that are necessary for the health of art — **art, which is a prolongation of the forest of our arteries**, prolongation which flows beyond the body and extends into the infinity of space and time'.¹⁴⁶ In Marinetti's analogy, Futurism is a microbe that has the ability to infiltrate and heal the infected body of art, which is what, in its healthy form, allows the human to extend, both in terms of duration and spatial length, beyond the bodily, thus truly conquering time and space. In 'Futurism and English Art', published in the *Observer* on 7 June 1914 and co-written by Marinetti and Nevinson, these medical metaphors persist: Futurism, the two writers announce, has arrived in England in the form of Marinetti to 'cure' English art 'of that gravest of all maladies — *passéism*'.¹⁴⁷ While the manifesto does not call for the formation of an explicitly 'Futurist' group in England (it rather demands the creation of a more ambiguous 'powerful advance guard'), it nevertheless makes clear, not least because Nevinson is immediately identified as an 'English Futurist painter', that this English 'advance guard' will be an offshoot of the Italian movement.¹⁴⁸ This new group are described, much like the Futurists themselves, as an 'exciting stimulant' which alone can 'deliver Art from its inevitable death', and strengthening it through a 'recuperative optimism'.¹⁴⁹ Combined with these metaphors of *passéist* 'infection' and Futurist 'cure' are metaphors of military engagement: Marinetti and Nevinson have given 'the signal for battle' with the publication of the manifesto, and the English cultural field will subsequently become a battleground wherein the Futurist 'advance guard' attacks

¹⁴⁶ Marinetti, 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature', p. 124. Original emphasis.

¹⁴⁷ F. T. Marinetti and C. R. W. Nevinson, 'Futurism and English Art', in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 196–98 (p. 196).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197 and p. 198.

England's dominant, passéist cultural forces, not least the members of the New English Art Club, who are condemned as 'sham revolutionaries'.¹⁵⁰

This also has implications for the art/life dichotomy that is at the centre of the movement's programme. If Futurism claimed to work against discourses of social decadence, then it also intended to form a rebuttal to cultural and artistic Decadence: in fact, it is notable that the two are often conflated in Futurist rhetoric. In part, it emerges in this way because cultural Decadence is portrayed in a rather one-dimensional fashion as an expression of decline, decay, and degeneration: in short, in a similar way to the characterisation of the tendency put forth by Arthur Symons, who described the movement as a 'new and beautiful and interesting disease'.¹⁵¹ This is undoubtedly a rhetorical strategy on the part of the Futurists, since by defining Decadence as a malady, both of art and society, they were able to position it unambiguously as the paradigm against which their movement was formed, and which it aimed to cure. But this conflation was also a result of their overarching aim to reintegrate art and life: in their desire to produce a total vision of the world it became necessary to assert themselves both against the alienation of literature and the artist from modern society and against moribund political and national life. For the Futurists, life is the energy that is needed in order to transform both literature and society, and it aimed to induce both a literature that was engaged with the public and a literature-oriented society, in which the proletarian masses become a revolutionary force for change. Unlike the Decadents, the Futurists encouraged in the individual and in literature an enthusiastic engagement with modernity, and sought to reduce the wide gulf that separated art from the public.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 196.

¹⁵¹ Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (November 1893), pp. 858–67 (p. 859).

Not all English cultural figures saw Futurism to be quite such a divorce from its *fin-de-siècle* literary inheritance, however. The Imagist poet Richard Aldington (1892–1962), writing in the *New Freewoman*, stated in 1913 that ‘M. Marinetti and his poems grow out of Mallarmé, Whitman, Laforgue and Romaine as surely as Picasso came out of Whistler, Van Gogh, and Cézanne’.¹⁵² Aldington did not question the literary value of Futurism, asserting that Marinetti was ‘really an artist in his own fashion’, and he recommended the Futurist anthology *I Poeti Futuristi* (1912) to his readers, placing particular emphasis on the works of Paolo Buzzi, Enrico Cavacchioli, and Armando Mazza. For Chesterton, however, ‘decadence, in its fullest sense of failure and impotence, is now to be found among those who live in the future, not in those who live in the past’. Arguing that the worship of the future was as nihilistic as worship of the past, and was in reality a worship of ‘Nothing’, he argued that the ‘Futurist does not really invade the future like a conqueror; he only flies to the future as a fugitive flies to sanctuary’.¹⁵³ Chesterton suggests that Futurism’s emphasis on futurity is only a different form of ivory tower, and remains a means of avoiding reality. Perhaps the most forceful articulation of Futurism’s Decadent tendencies, however, came from A. R. Orage (1873–1934), the editor of the *New Age*, who asserted:

Decadence I have often defined as the substitution of the part for the whole; and in this sense Futurism is decadence in extremis. I know there is something to be said for Futurism and that it contains an intelligible idea. There is no rationalism to equal the rationalism of certain forms of lunacy. But what is sound in it already finds a place in good literature; but does good literature find any place in Futurism? I have read Signor Marinetti’s “poems,” I have looked at Signor Marinetti’s “pictures”; and I see in both a cell of a healthy organism swollen and overgrown to cover and kill the organism itself.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Richard Aldington, ‘M. Marinetti’s Lectures’, *The New Freewoman*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1 December 1913), p. 226 (p. 226).

¹⁵³ G. K. Chesterton, ‘Our Note Book’, *The Illustrated London News* (4 December 1909), p. 785 (p. 785).

¹⁵⁴ A. R. Orage, ‘Readers and Writers’, *The New Age*, vol. 14, no. 4 (27 November 1913), pp. 112–15 (p. 113).

Orage's criticism of Futurism is rooted in his consideration of their poetic form, which is defined, much like Symons's definition of Decadence, as a style of literature that is always 'in excess'.¹⁵⁵ Orage almost certainly also takes his cue from Paul Bourget's well known characterisation of Decadence in *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1881), in which he argues that: 'A decadent style is one in which the unity of the book falls apart, replaced by the independence of the page, where the page decomposes to make way for the independence of the sentence, and the sentence makes way for the word'.¹⁵⁶ Narrative unity is displaced by lexical dissolution in Decadence, and the importance placed on the word in Futurism's words-in-freedom poetic practice is understood to continue this tendency. It was, as I shall demonstrate in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, a common strategy of English writers to deny the modernism of the Futurists by representing their literature in comparison with Symbolist and Decadent writings, to which they had declared diametrical opposition.

Nevertheless, Futurism's broad aims of reconciling art and life were undoubtedly a level on which English writers could find common ground with the Italian movement. Expressions of the desire to see a closer connection between art and life were widespread in cultural writings even before Futurism emerged, and although no consensus was reached on how this might be achieved, the sense that a new direction in literature and art must be found was prevalent. This was not only to be found in the pronouncements of Charles Ricketts and Laurence Binyon, which have been noted in the introduction. In the first issue of the *New Age* in 1907, one article called for the reform of art through an increased focus on the practice of architecture, which would 'rescue art from the gallery and bring it back again into

¹⁵⁵ Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', p. 860.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1920), p. 25. English translation quoted in Alex Murray and Jason David Hall, 'Introduction: Decadent Poetics', in *Decadent Poetics: Literature and Form at the British Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Alex Murray and Jason David Hall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1–25 (p. 3).

relation with life' and promote 'an intellectual understanding between the artist and the public'.¹⁵⁷ In the first issue of the *English Review* (1908–1937), Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939) was notably, in his article on 'The Functions of the Arts in the Republic', to articulate the need for a space in which to discuss 'the horizon' of 'arts and letters'. Ford's concept of the aims of modernism, as we may retrospectively term it, were dissimilar to avant-garde strategies of belligerent activism: as he put it, 'we are here not to cry out "Go in this direction," but simply to point out where we stand'. Yet it was to be a 'picture of the life we live' that functioned against 'the true characteristic of modern life in which intimacies are so rare, in which social contacts are so innumerable'.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Ford's assertion of 'No party bias' in the journal emerges, as Mark Morrisson has argued, from a hope for 'a coherent public sphere — one stabilised not by strong party structures, but by an imaginative and cohesive culture', which locates him in opposition to the fragmented political climate of Edwardian England.¹⁵⁹ A later article on the plastic arts claimed that 'we are concerned with the people as a whole; with the body politic, not with classes cultured or productively artistic', and that the 'English man of letters [...] has practically no social weight and practically no contact with the life of the people. It is with the attempt to form some such meeting-place that The English Review has set out upon its career'.¹⁶⁰

The aims to reconnect literature and art with life, and in doing so institute a new relationship with the public to reshape public consciousness, can be seen to be a

¹⁵⁷ A. J. Penty, 'The Restoration of Beauty to Life', *The New Age*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2 May 1907), p. 5 (p. 5).

¹⁵⁸ Ford Madox Ford, 'The Functions of the Arts in the Republic: I Literature', *The English Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (December 1908), pp. 157–60 (p. 159 and p. 160).

¹⁵⁹ Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905–1920* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 19–20.

¹⁶⁰ E. R., 'The Functions of the Arts in the Republic: IV The Plastic Arts', *The English Review*, vol. 1, no. 4 (March 1909), pp. 795–98 (p. 795 and p. 797).

common agenda in pre-war England, which points to shared aims with Futurism. This is not to argue that Futurism's relationship with the masses was solely the result of a positive social agenda, for as Christine Poggi points out, Futurist writers frequently contrived to 'disdain the public and regard themselves as the elite of a cultural renaissance'.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the connections that are formed between the artist and the public in Futurism were broadly democratising, and their strategies of cultural dissemination posited new ways for thinking about the place of literature in modern society.

Conclusion

Responsive to a rapidly modernising world, the Italian Futurists were preoccupied with conceiving forms of identity and community in the modern era. They did not understand themselves to be cosmopolitan: Futurist texts demonstrate a strong attachment to Italy, nationalist and patriotic sentiments, and are antithetical to normative ambitions for a global harmony of peoples. Yet their drive to create a new international cultural consciousness through print culture indicates that the movement coheres with critical notions of cultural cosmopolitanism, which sit alongside ideas of national primacy and hegemony. For the Futurists, the coexistence of these tendencies was not paradoxical but rather a fundamental necessity of existing in an internationalised space of literary production, in which Italy occupied a dominated position, particularly in relation to France. Applying a Bourdieuan analysis to Futurism's early spatial trajectories in Europe demonstrates the extent to which nationalist purposes underlie Futurism's cosmopolitan actions: in order to achieve

¹⁶¹ Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, p. x.

cultural recognition and prestige it became necessary for the movement not only to accrue symbolic capital in Italy, but also in France. However, the existence of avant-garde groups in Paris led to Futurism's infiltration of the English cultural field, where there was no significant avant-garde force extant.

Readdressing Futurism's reception produces a more nuanced understanding of the movement's entry into England. In contrast to many critical accounts of Futurism's emergence, I demonstrate that not all contemporary reviews denounced the movement, and many cultural figures considered the Futurist aim to break down the division between art and life a necessary strategy to subvert discourses of Decadence and decline in the pre-war period. The aim to reconnect literature with life also placed a new emphasis on creating new publics for reading, and for literature to reshape public consciousness. The implications of Futurist strategies for readership and material culture were to be of particular interest to the poet and editor Harold Monroe, as I shall demonstrate in the following chapter.

'The Beautiful Future': Harold Monro, Poetry and Drama, and Futurism

In the September 1913 issue of the London-based journal *Poetry and Drama*, Harold Monro made the astonishing declaration that, not only would the issue be devoted to the work of the Italian Futurists, but also that the set surrounding the periodical 'claim ourselves, also, to be futurists'. The announcement was followed by Monro's assertion that '[l]ong ago, before we heard of the Italian Movement, we conceived the desire to "serve, worship, and obey the beautiful Future"', and a short, enumerated list of points that may be identified as a manifesto:

The first principles of *our* Futurism are:

- I. To forget God, Heaven, Hell, Personal Immortality, and to remember, always, the earth.
- II. To lift the eyes from a sentimental contemplation of the past, and, though dwelling in the present, nevertheless, always, to *live*, in the future of the earth.¹

Monro, a British writer who was born and spent the early part of his life in Saint-Gilles, Brussels, is not often studied in current modernist literary criticism. His biographer, Dominic Hibberd, has written that 'no one did more for the development of twentieth-century poetry, yet his reward was near-oblivion'.² Monro was a poet, authoring collections including *Judas* (1907), *Before Dawn: Poems and Impressions* (1911), and *Strange Meetings: A Book of Poems* (1917). But it was in his roles as anthologist, as editor of the periodicals the *Poetry Review* (1912–1913), *Poetry and Drama* (1913–1914), and the *Chapbook* (1919–1925), and as proprietor of the Poetry Bookshop, that he emerges at the centre of a network of modernist writers and

¹ Harold Monro, 'Varia', *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), p. 262 (p. 262). Original emphasis.

² Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age*, p. 3. No entry is given at all for Harold Monro in *The Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism*, ed. by Paul Poplawski (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003).

cultural figures operating in London.³ The Poetry Bookshop, which Monroe founded in 1913 at 35 Devonshire Street (now Boswell Street) in Bloomsbury, London, was not only a place for selling books, but also a publishing house for contemporary poets. As Hibberd has stated, it was a ‘mission house, dedicated to the making, reading and propagation of poetry, not just for poetry’s sake, but for the sake of humanity’s future’.⁴ The Poetry Bookshop published Ezra Pound’s seminal anthology *Des Imagistes* (1914), Richard Aldington’s *Images (1910–1915)* (1915), and the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies (1912–1922). Monroe also corresponded with major modernist writers such as Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, among innumerable others.⁵

Monroe’s position at the centre of the Anglo-American modernist cultural nexus should therefore not be underestimated, but he is also particularly significant, especially for the purposes of this thesis, for the point of intersection that he forms between English modernist and Italian Futurist literary networks. Monroe had first met F. T. Marinetti in Milan in August 1913, after which they were in regular correspondence.⁶ During this time, Monroe arranged for a comprehensive selection of Futurist writing to be published in a special, Futurist issue of *Poetry and Drama*. Although, as has been stated in the previous chapter, certain Futurist manifestos had already been published in England — the ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ and ‘Against Passéist Venice’ had been published in the *Tramp* in 1910 and the Sackville

³ Monroe’s editorship of *The Poetry Review* lasted from 1912 to 1913. The periodical, however, continues to this day.

⁴ Hibberd, *Harold Monroe: Poet of the New Age*, p. 4.

⁵ In fact, Monroe coined the term ‘Georgian’ himself, to distinguish the ‘modern’ poets of the era of George V from the poets of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

⁶ The letters from Marinetti to Monroe are located in the Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, United States of America. All correspondence from Marinetti is written in French, and all translations of these manuscripts are my own. Monroe’s diary records that he went to Milan on 24 August 1913. See Harold Monroe, *Diary*, 1913. London, British Library, Poetry Bookshop Papers, Add MS 57742 D. The newspaper article ‘What Futurism Means’, *Pall Mall Gazette* (31 October 1913), p. 9 (p. 9), states that Monroe met Marinetti in Milan ‘not long ago’.

Gallery exhibition booklet had included ‘The Exhibitors to the Public’ — the September 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama* was the first time that English audiences had direct, translated access to Futurist *poetry*. In this sense, Monro’s publication of Futurist poems constitutes perhaps the first time that Futurist literature had been published in a sincere way in England. Monro also invited Marinetti to give a lecture at the Poetry Bookshop on 18 November 1913, at which Marinetti spoke on the subject of ‘Futurism in Poetry’.⁷ He later helped Marinetti by arranging for him to give a lecture in Cambridge on ‘La Poésie Futuriste et les Mots en Liberté’ [Futurist Poetry and Words in Freedom], a few days after his lecture at the Doré Galleries on 28 May 1914.

While Monro’s collaboration with Futurism was, in the pages of *Poetry and Drama*, rather short-lived, it seems strange that in most critical accounts of Futurism in England his involvement is relegated to only a sentence, or at most a short paragraph.⁸ His relationship with Marinetti and the Futurists was far less explosive and publicity-generating than the Futurists’ relationship with Lewis, Pound, and the Vorticists, which is very likely why it has garnered less attention in literary criticism. However, as I hope to demonstrate, their collaboration was also more extensive, considered, sympathetic, and long-standing than the Vorticist-Futurist relationship. It would be legitimate to argue that Monro was not only an important early translator of Italian Futurist literature, but also a significant editor of Futurism in England — if not *the* official English editor of Italian Futurism — and, to a certain extent, an English Futurist writer in his own right.

⁷ See ‘Futurism in Poetry’, *The Times*, 18 November 1913, p. 5.

⁸ See, for example, Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 105; Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 204; Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism: A Study of Influence*, pp. 37–38; Buchowska and Wright, ‘The Futurist Invasion of Great Britain, 1910–1914’, pp. 214–15 and p. 217.

Moreover, while Monro and the *Poetry and Drama* set's foray into Futurism and their publication of Futurist poems has been occasionally — if very briefly and summarily — commented on in studies of Futurism in England, the actual texts chosen for translation and publication have not been.⁹ What is particularly interesting about the Futurist poetry that was published in *Poetry and Drama*, I argue, is the way in which it highlights modes of continuity between Decadent and Symbolist styles of late nineteenth-century literature, and innovative, modernist forms of poetic practice. While Monro's vision of modern poetry is difficult to identify with the modernist precision of Pound and the Imagists, his writing, much of which addresses the future direction of poetry, is more indicative of the extent to which poetry in England was fundamentally transitional in nature in the period. For Monro, Futurism represented a legitimate mode of experimentation in this phase of change and development, which, although distanced from, was not divorced entirely from nineteenth-century literary forms.

The aim of this chapter is to reconsider Monro's importance in the English modernist and Italian Futurist literary network, and to re-evaluate the manner in which Futurism was manifested in pre-war England. The first section demonstrates that Monro's connection with Marinetti has often been overlooked in literary criticism, and that Monro's collaboration with the Futurists constitutes an important aspect of Futurist networks in England in the pre-war years. Here, I use Marinetti's unpublished letters to Monro to support my argument. For Monro, Futurism's appeal lay chiefly in its aim to reconnect poetry with everyday life: in the first issue of the *Poetry Review* in 1912 Monro wrote that poetry is 'uninteresting to-day' because it is

⁹ See Anna Maltese Lawton, 'Marinetti in Inghilterra: scritti inediti', *Il Verri, Rivista del letteratura*, 5th series, vol. 10 (1975), 138–49. This article only transcribes and describes Marinetti's letters to Monro from the Charles E. Young Research Library archive, however.

‘remote from life’, and that it must be ‘fundamental, vital, innate, or nothing at all’.¹⁰ The movement’s articulation of themes of vitality and action formed a way in which poetry could regain what Monroe termed its ‘popular appeal’, and they pursued mass cultural forms towards this end. However, as I show in my second section, what is particularly interesting about the Futurist poetry that is translated and published in *Poetry and Drama* is that it seems to undermine and even directly contradict the Futurist aim to draw inspiration from the masses, as set out in their very first manifesto of 1909, as well as the radical themes and theories set out in their explicitly literary manifesto, ‘Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty’, which was published alongside the poems in *Poetry and Drama*. Here I wish to highlight that this poetry is conspicuous in its similarity to late nineteenth-century Symbolist writing and in its treatment of often Decadent tropes and images, even as it moves towards what one might more readily consider a ‘Futurist’ aesthetic of action, health, and vitality. To a certain extent, of course, Futurist theory habitually preceded its practice: nevertheless, it is significant that, for Monroe, the type of poetry that would attract more readers in England was broadly transitional in nature, between Symbolist free verse forms that highlight the alienation and individuality of the poet and Futurist attempts to subvert and overcome a cultural exhaustion that was frequently associated with Decadence by modernist figures. The seeming contradiction in this can be explained by two strands of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844–1900) thought that were equally important for Monroe and the Futurists, as I explain in my third section. These were, on the one hand, the aim to overthrow the sense of cultural exhaustion and obsession with the past, and to found a new set of values that were based on the importance of life; and, on the other, an emphasis on the individual leader, derived from Nietzsche’s

¹⁰ Harold Monroe, ‘The Future of Poetry’, *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1912), pp. 10–13 (p. 12).

theories of the superman, which emphasised the important role of the poet in modern society. Although, as I demonstrate, Monro's enthusiasm for Marinetti's specific brand of Futurism waned, not only because of the explicit Italian nationalism of Futurism, but, more importantly, because Monro thought that the Futurists adhered rather too closely to a Symbolist poetics of escape and transcendence, his broader sense of a Futurist cause was not diminished, and he continued to maintain an interest in and promote Futurism for the remainder of his life.

Monro's interest in Nietzsche was the principal reason why he came to be interested in the theories of the Futurists. Although the Futurists' use of Nietzschean theories was based on a somewhat superficial understanding of the philosopher's theories of the *Übermensch* — a fact that became quickly apparent to Monro — the idea that modern poetry could bridge the gap between art and life by appealing to the masses, while simultaneously salvaging the role of the poet as a figure of leadership in modern society was one that Monro wished to pursue. While, in *Poetry and Drama*, Monro stated that Futurist poetry was 'for the Italians' and that the English must find their own path, this chapter will show that his interest in Futurism and promotion of Futurist works never waned.

I. Harold Monro and F. T. Marinetti's Futurism

Monro's contemporaries sometimes implied that he was indiscriminate in the poetry he chose to promote through the Poetry Bookshop and *Poetry and Drama*. Osbert Sitwell, for example, wrote that 'new work always attracted, although it may sometimes have irritated, him', and that Monro was 'indulgent to all poets. He liked new ideas even when they did not match his own, and [...] he would often of an

evening bring together whole schools of poets of the most diverse faith, opinions and temperament.’¹¹ In this regard, Monro’s interest in the Italian Futurists and their work has often been attributed to a general desire to promote poetry for its own sake, rather than any particular identification with Futurism’s aims. However, it is highly unlikely that interest alone would have prompted Monro to declare himself a Futurist in *Poetry and Drama*. Monro opens the issue by writing: ‘It may surprise [...] some of our readers that we devote the principal space of a whole number of *Poetry and Drama* to the publication of matter [...] associated with that group of young Italian rebels led by the famous Marinetti’. He goes on to explain his motives for doing so: ‘Firstly, a movement which has obtained such wide notoriety legitimately demands study and consideration. Secondly, we claim ourselves, also, to be futurists.’¹² Monro’s reasons for declaring himself to be a Futurist were in fact based on a sense of common purpose with Marinetti’s movement, which posed a means by which poetry might regain its popular appeal at a time when older forms of poetry were becoming irrelevant to a rapidly modernising world.

The quarterly journal, priced at 2s. 6d. per issue, was established in March 1913 and closed in December 1914. It was ostensibly founded as a result of Monro’s wish to ‘enlarge the scope of his periodical’ the *Poetry Review*: in fact, it was at first implied that *Poetry and Drama* would be a change in name of the *Poetry Review* only, rather than a completely different journal.¹³ After Monro had relinquished control of the *Poetry Review*, however, the journal continued to be published, with Stephen Phillips appointed as editor in Monro’s place. The members of *Poetry and Drama* were principally Monro and Arundel del Re (1892–1974), the half-Italian

¹¹ Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room* (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 34.

¹² Monro, ‘Varia’, p. 262.

¹³ Harold Monro, ‘Personal Explanation’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 1 (March 1913), pp. 8–11 (p. 8).

assistant editor of the journal. Edward Thomas, a writer and literary critic now best known for his war poetry, was an advisor to Monro, and contributed either articles or reviews to every issue. Other prominent writers such as F. S. Flint (1885–1960), an important Imagist poet, and Gilbert Cannan (1884–1955), a reviewer, translator, and novelist, contributed regularly to the journal, and Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, Henry Newbolt, and John Rodker were also notable, if more occasional, contributors. The journal was printed by the Westminster Press, which had been run since 1899 by Gerard Meynell (son of the poet Alice Meynell), a printer who had strong ties to the British Arts and Crafts movement and was notable for his commitment to high standards of printing.¹⁴ In all, the journal may be defined as a cultural mouthpiece for the promotion of what Brooke termed in 1913 the ‘New Poetry’ of the early twentieth century.¹⁵

In the first instance, it is perhaps important to consider why, for Marinetti, it was so crucial to form a relationship with a cultural figure in England. Marinetti did not speak any English — all of his lectures and performances in England were conducted in French — and so he required a contact that spoke English and French well, and, more importantly, who occupied a central position in the London literary milieu.¹⁶ Monro was a good candidate for this as a result of his positions as publisher, reviewer, and proprietor of a bookshop used for poetry readings. To turn to Pierre Bourdieu’s theorisation of the field of cultural production briefly, it is possible to understand how the connection with Monro in particular was an important one for

¹⁴ Robin Kinross, *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History* (London: Hyphen Press, 1992), p. 66. See also John Dreyfus, ‘Gerard Meynell and the Westminster Press’, *Matrix*, vol. 10 (Winter 1990), 55–68.

¹⁵ Rupert Brooke to Harold Monro, 11 June 1913, King’s College, Cambridge. Quoted in Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age*, p. 126.

¹⁶ Even at his lecture on ‘Futurism in Poetry’ at the Poets’ Club on 17 November 1913 (the day before his reading at the Poetry Bookshop), *The Times* reports that Marinetti ‘spoke in French’. ‘Futurism in Poetry’, p. 5.

Marinetti, in theoretical terms. If Futurism, although verging on the field of large-scale production in its emphasis on mass cultural forms, actually operated in the much smaller sub-field of restricted production, with its formal experimentation and innovation, and its dependence on cultural networks for dissemination, it needed to achieve the ‘truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members [were] both privileged clients and competitors’.¹⁷ Literary texts and works of art are given their aesthetic status and value via the ‘legitimizing authority’ of institutions such as ‘academies, museums, learned societies and the educational system’: however, as Bourdieu notes, the ‘agents of consecration’ within a field may also be ‘organizations which are not fully institutionalized: literary circles, critical circles, salons, and small groups surrounding a famous author or associating with a publisher, a review or literary or artistic magazine’.¹⁸ Fully institutionalised the Poetry Bookshop certainly was not: it had only formally opened in January 1913,¹⁹ and it has recently been humorously described by Aaron Jaffe as ‘perhaps only slightly more respectable’ than Mr Verloc’s insalubrious shop in Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1907).²⁰ In December 1913, almost a year after the Bookshop had first opened, Monro’s greatest concern was not that it would be forced to close as a result of insufficient capital, but rather that it should never ‘depart from its present happy vagabond way of existence and seek to become an *institution*’.²¹ Nevertheless, Abercrombie, T. E. Hulme, and the sculptor Jacob Epstein had, at different times,

¹⁷ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 115.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁹ The Poetry Bookshop was advertised as being open from January 1913: however, Robert H. Ross has argued that there is evidence to suggest that it was effectively in operation from December 1912. See Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 95. Hibberd also dates the shop’s opening as 1 December 1912. Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age*, p. 109.

²⁰ Aaron Jaffe, ‘Publication, Patronage, Censorship: Literary Production and the Fortunes of Modernist Value’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. by Brooker, Gasiorek, Longworth, and Thacker, pp. 315–34 (p. 328).

²¹ Harold Monro, ‘The Bookshop’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 4 (December 1913), p. 387 (p. 387). Original emphasis.

lodged in the upper rooms of the establishment, and Yeats, Brooke, Ford Madox Ford, and Walter de la Mare, among many other poets, gave readings in the shop's main rooms.²² Evidently, the Poetry Bookshop may be characterised as an important site of modernist cultural connection and production, and the journals associated with the Poetry Bookshop, through Monro, may be seen to strengthen this legitimising authority. The Bookshop's less institutional status was likely to have been one of the principal reasons for Marinetti's affiliation with Monro, since Futurism distanced itself from traditional institutions of officially sanctioned literature.

In fact, Monro may be identified as a Bourdieuan 'art-businessman' in the restricted field of cultural production of pre-war London. His passion for poetry and his determination to ensure that the production of poetry could thrive — both by publishing living poets' work and by helping to free poets from more material concerns by offering cheap accommodation — cemented his relationships with a wide range of cultural producers, consumers, and critics, and gave him no small measure of authority in the restricted field. Monro's varied activities in the cultural field establish him precisely as one of Bourdieu's 'inspired talent-spotters' who is 'guided by their disinterested, unreasoning passion for a work of art' and have thus “made” the painter or writer [...] by encouraging him in difficult moments with the faith they had in him, guiding him with their advice and freeing him from material worries'.²³ The art-businessman's particular type of authority is formulated as a 'credit-based value, which only exists in the relationship with the field of production as a whole': that is, in his connections with writers who belong to his 'stable', with other dealers and publishers, with critics who either respect or are in conflict with his aesthetic judgement, and with his clients and customers. It is, as Bourdieu writes, 'nothing

²² Grant, *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop*, p. 67, and pp. 77–79.

²³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 77.

other than “credit” with a set of agents who constitute “connections” whose value is proportionate to the credit they themselves command’.²⁴

When Monro’s position as an art-businessman in this milieu is considered, Marinetti’s motivation for communication becomes clear: an opportunity to extend the imagined community of Futurists into the English field of cultural production, sanctioned by the legitimising authority of Monro. Marinetti was careful to communicate regularly with Monro and thanked him for ‘le beau numéro de *Poetry and Drama* consacré en futurisme — Je me propose de vous exprimer minutieusement toute ma sympathie et mon enthousiasme pour vos admirables traductions, à mon prochain passage à Londres’ [the beautiful issue of *Poetry and Drama* devoted to Futurism — I propose to express to you thoroughly all my sympathy and enthusiasm for your admirable translations, on my next visit to London].²⁵ Although this letter is undated, it seems likely that it was written in late September 1913, as Marinetti states that he was just returning from Berlin: ‘Je viens en ce moment de Berlin où j’ai obtenu un très grand succès avec deux conférences par lesquelles j’ai inauguré l’Herbst-Salon [*sic*], qui contient plusieurs salles de peinture futuriste. Je suis invité à en tenir deux autres dans le même salon’ [I’m returning at the moment from Berlin where I had a great success with two conferences in which I inaugurated the Herbst Salon, which contains several rooms of Futurist paintings. I am invited to hold two more in the same salon].²⁶ As Marinetti speaks of returning from the Herbst Salon [Autumn Salon], the Berlin art exhibition inspired by the Parisian Salon d’Automne that displayed a number of Italian Futurist paintings and which opened on 20 September 1913, we may infer that it was written some time after

²⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁵ F. T. Marinetti to Harold Monro, [September 1913]. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

this date. Along with the copies of the *Poetry and Drama* issue, Monro had probably proposed to Marinetti that he should give a reading of Futurist poetry in the Poetry Bookshop. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate Monro's letters to Marinetti to confirm this. However, Marinetti responded in more detail to what I interpret to be Monro's suggestion, on 23 October 1913:

Je viens de recevoir votre dépêche. C'est entendu. Ma première conférence sur Le Futurisme dans la poésie (avec déclamation de fragments de mon poème 'Adrianople' — mots en liberté) aura lieu le ~~16~~ 18 Novembre [1913]. La deuxième sur La Peinture, la Sculpture Futuristes et L'Art des Bruits aura lieu le ~~18~~ 16 Novembre. Quant'à la conférence au Cabaret-Théâtre-Club [*sic*], je suis enchanté de la faire, du moment qu'elle m'est proposée par vous, et vous pouvez la fixer pour le soir du 17 Novembre ou du 19 ou du 20 Novembre. Veuillez me fixer cette dernière date et faire le plus de réclame possible à ces 3 conférences, pour qu'il y ait beaucoup de monde intéressant. Agréez avec mes remerciements anticipés une chaleureuse poignée de main de votre ami, F. T. Marinetti.²⁷

[I have just received your telegram. It's agreed. My first lecture on Futurism in poetry (with declamation of fragments of my poem 'Andrinople' — words in freedom) will take place on ~~16~~ 18 November. The second on Painting, Futurist Sculpture and The Art of Noises will take place on ~~18~~ 16 November. As for the conference at the Cabaret Theatre Club, I am delighted to do it, as soon as it is proposed by you, and you can arrange it for the evening of 17 November or 19 or 20 November. Please fix this last date and do as much advertising as possible for these 3 conferences, so that there are many interesting people. Please accept my thanks in advance with a warm handshake from your friend, F. T. Marinetti]

It was even suggested by Marinetti that the Poetry Bookshop reading be repeated, on 'Mercredi à 6 heures pour ceux qui ne pourront pas entrer Mardi' ['Wednesday at 6 o'clock for those who cannot enter on Tuesday'].²⁸ Prior to his arrival in London, Marinetti sent Monro a telegram from Brussels: 'Très heureux de vous voir demain samedi | Savoy Hotel a [*sic*] 6 heures votre ami Marinetti' ['Very happy to see you tomorrow Saturday | Savoy Hotel at 6 o'clock your friend Marinetti'].²⁹ Although it

²⁷ F. T. Marinetti to Harold Monro, 23 October [1913]. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2.

²⁸ F. T. Marinetti to Harold Monro, 7 November [1913]. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2.

²⁹ F. T. Marinetti to Harold Monro, [14 November 1913]. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2. It is likely that the meeting between Marinetti and Monro on Saturday 15 November at the Savoy Hotel was also attended

does not appear that there was a second reading at the Bookshop, the two writers probably met each other at least twice, or as many as three times in the week that Marinetti stayed in London.

Monro's interest in Marinetti was certainly due to his status as a cultural producer of poetry, and thus a means to extend his cultural 'credit' through the formation of new connections. He was undoubtedly keen to keep abreast of contemporary currents in European literature rather than limiting his critical attention to solely English writing: Flint's 'French Chronicle' was a feature of every issue of *Poetry and Drama* from its inception, while Del Re occasionally contributed an 'Italian Chronicle', and in the second year of *Poetry and Drama*'s existence T. E. Hulme contributed a 'German Chronicle'. Peter Howarth has therefore argued that subscribers to *Poetry and Drama* 'would probably have been better informed about new movements in European modernism than anyone else in the country, as well as thoroughly familiar with the Georgian poets'.³⁰ In fact, Monro's conception of the new direction of English literature was remarkably fluid and open to influence from other European cultural movements; he privileged a cosmopolitan approach to literary production in which an understanding of and attention to the output of other national cultures was imperative.

However, Monro's salient concerns for literature were 'a new poetic diction' and a 'return to life':³¹ thus, his interest in Futurism was above all due to Marinetti's aim to reconcile the contemporary divide between art and life, which manifested in

by C. R. W. Nevinson, as a letter from Nevinson to Lewis states: 'I have at last run Marinetti to earth. He is in Brussels! & has just wired me from there & fixed an appointment with me at the Savoy tomorrow (Sat) at 6 o'clock.' C. R. W. Nevinson to Wyndham Lewis, 14 November 1913. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collections, Wyndham Lewis Collection, Collection Number 4612, Box 128, Fol. 133.

³⁰ Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 28.

³¹ Harold Monro, 'Freedom', *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1912), pp. 59–60 (p. 59).

the promotion of the energy of ‘life’ to revolutionise both art and society, through an emphasis on the ideals of youth, action, and even spiritual health. In Futurism, art was no longer a religion to be worshipped, but an expression of the intensity of lived existence, and thus had the potential to effect fundamental change in society. Concomitant with this ideal was a desire to institute a more direct relationship between literature and its public. The publication of literary and artistic manifestos in newspapers, and the Futurists’ determination to ‘sing the great masses shaken with work, pleasure, or rebellion and the ‘multicoloured and polyphonic tidal waves of revolution in the modern metropolis’ — a claim that Monro had certainly read as he quoted it in *Poetry and Drama* — indicated that Futurism’s main prerogative lay in addressing not only the intellectual elite, but also reaching new, non-intellectual mass readerships.³² This was also to be seen in their performative readings of manifestos in their *serate* [evening performances], which, declaimed to a large theatre audience, encouraged the active participation and even rioting of the spectators, thus transplanting art from the private to the public sphere in a way that provoked action rather than inspiring contemplation.

Futurist strategies of engaging the public were certainly not lost on Monro, whose own motivations for opening the Poetry Bookshop bear remarkable similarities to Marinetti’s aims in initiating the Futurist programme. Monro writes in an article that was published in the *Daily Herald* in May 1913 that:

Our object at the Poetry Bookshop is to create, so far as possible, a link between the poet and the public, and incidentally to influence the taste of the public, and cultivate the almost obsolete power of listening with concentration. At these ordinary readings here, which we hold twice a week,

³² Marinetti, ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’, p. 51; Harold Monro, ‘Marinetti’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), p. 263 (p. 263). Monro translates the phrase as: ‘We will sing the great multitudes furious with work, pleasure, or revolt; the many-coloured and polyphonic assaults of revolution in the modern capitals’.

we select the poetry to be read with great care, with the object in view of not boring by any excess of intellectuality.³³

Monro's ambition, as expressed in this article, is to present literature to the public in an accessible way, particularly by holding readings of poetry, but the necessity of social engagement is to be carefully balanced by the importance of cultivating and educating the public. He did not wish to promote mass culture in and of itself, but rather to promote poetry through the use of its publicising potential. This is not to argue that Monro and Marinetti's aims were precisely the same: Marinetti undoubtedly sought to induce the cultural and political rebirth of Italy by means of rousing and bombastic nationalist rhetoric, while Monro's aims were far less political, and less nationalist, in scope. Nevertheless, both the Futurists and Monro aspired for a greater importance of poetry in modern society, and an increase in the dissemination of poetical texts. As Monro writes in the Futurist issue of *Poetry and Drama* in September 1913:

our present hope [for the future of poetry] lies rather in circulation than innovation. We desire to see a public created that may read verse as it now reads its newspapers [...] [Books of poetry] are meant to be sold anywhere and everywhere, carried in the pocket, read at any spare moment, committed to memory and passed on [...].³⁴

Monro's emphasis on the importance of the circulation of material texts, even above that of revolution in poetic form, and his analogy between the publication of poetry and newspapers, demonstrates his enthusiasm for what he perceived to be the Futurist cause. He declared that the *Poetry and Drama* set admired, 'with whole hearts, the spirit of fun and recklessness in the Italian movement. Produced and rendered in such a spirit, poetry automatically regains something of its popular appeal.'³⁵ The *Book of the Futurist Poets* (*I Poeti Futuristi*, 1912), which Monro noted, more than once in the

³³ Harold Monro, 'Poets and Public', *Daily Herald*, 19 May 1913, p. 6.

³⁴ Harold Monro, 'Broad-sides and Chap-Books', *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), p. 265 (p. 265).

³⁵ Ibid.

issue, to be ‘in its thirty-fifth thousand’ copy, was praised predominantly for its dissemination rather than formal innovation.³⁶ however, Monro also recognised, in a tone that betrays some regret, that Futurist poetry was ‘composed recklessly for immediate and wide circulation and declamation in large assemblies, frequently for purposes of propaganda’.³⁷ It seems, on the whole, that Monro was critical of the Futurist use of literature as a conduit for such explicitly political and nationalist aims. However, the spirit of ‘popular appeal’ that Futurism engendered was also to be somehow regained in English culture. Clearly, Monro’s focus was geared towards re-establishing and maintaining a large audience for poetry in England.

However, while Monro was focused on popularising poetry, he was also committed to disseminating high standards of verse and criticism. His work before 1913 was frequently the publication of what may be termed ‘high’ or ‘pure’ art, much of it the work of 1890s and turn-of-the-century poets. During his editorship of the *Poetry Review* he had published writing on the work of Yeats and the Celtic school, which was described as originating from Yeats’s *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889). Although known principally as a modernist poet, Yeats had started his career writing alongside poets of the 1890s, and had been published in the *Savoy* (1896), a periodical that had been founded by Aubrey Beardsley, Leonard Smithers, and Arthur Symonds. Monro also published the poetry of T. Sturge Moore (1870–1944), a close friend of Yeats: the two had co-founded the Literary Theatre Club in 1901, along with Laurence Binyon, Charles Ricketts, and Ethel and Sybil Pye. Moore was the subject of an article alongside the one on Yeats in the April 1912 issue, and his poem ‘The Phantom of a Rose’ was published in September 1912. Monro also published poetry that was unambiguously modernist: the October 1912 issue on ‘American Poetry’

³⁶ Harold Monro, ‘Futurist Poetry’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), p. 264 (p. 264).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

featured seven poems by William Carlos Williams, and Monro had also published Pound's 'Prolegomena' in the February 1912 issue, along with his poems 'Oboes', 'Sub Mare', 'L'Invitation', 'Salve Pontifex', 'Dieu! Qu'il la Fait', and 'Δ'ΩPIA', the latter of which was later republished in *Des Imagistes*. One of Pound's early critical essays and a significant statement of modernism, 'Prolegomena' brands nineteenth-century poetry as 'sentimentalistic' and 'mannerish', and calls for a new, modern conception of poetry as a 'pure art' that would be 'harder and saner', and 'austere, direct, free from emotional slither'.³⁸ Pound had known Monro since 1912 and encouraged and supported the *Poetry Review* in spite of differences with Monro regarding methods of modernising poetry.³⁹ Monro may thus be seen to be working during an emerging modernism, operating in a literary milieu that was at an intersection between 1890s and modernist literature. The *Poetry Review* and *Poetry and Drama* were certainly less niche than *fin-de-siècle* periodicals, for they were, as Faith Binckes has argued, 'less of a self-conscious play of the marginal against the central'.⁴⁰

Thus, while Monro placed great importance on the increased dissemination of poetry, he also indicates that the choice of the specific type of poetry to read was to be carefully mediated — nominated, even — by intellectual elites: those who are rich in cultural capital and relatively poor in economic capital, and who are arbiters of cultural legitimacy and taste. Without these figures, he writes in 'Poets and Public', 'I fear the reader in the park, or indeed at clubs or Trade Union meetings, would invariably give his audience Kipling, Wilcox, and other poems by known or unknown

³⁸ Ezra Pound, 'Prolegomena', *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1912), pp. 72–6 (p. 75 and p. 76).

³⁹ Grant, *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Faith Binckes, 'Journalism and Periodical Culture', in *Late Victorian into Modern*, ed. by Laura Marcus, Michele Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 523–58 (p. 537).

writers of the style most resembling the music hall, song, and the hymn'.⁴¹ Instead, poetry was to be chosen by agents of consecration, such as the Poetry Bookshop, and by legitimised art-businessmen: poetry that Monroe particularly thought should be read aloud to the public were Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', John Keats's odes, and the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne.⁴² In this sense, the role of the poet or artist in the modern era is, for Monroe, similar to Decadent and Aestheticist models, in which the artist or writer still has a significant role in guiding cultural consumption.

Yet Futurism's alliance with ostensibly 'low' cultural forms did not mean that it abjured 'high' art either, for its engagement with mass culture was precariously balanced with a need to be taken seriously by the restricted field, for which 'art for art's sake' was a maxim. While open to mass cultural, commercial forms such as newspaper publications and the variety theatre, the Futurists also continued to cultivate poetry, which, according to Bourdieu, is the most 'exemplary incarnation of "pure" art' because it is symbolically dominant but economically dominated (i.e., not 'saleable').⁴³ Until 1930, the Futurists also chose to exclude photography from their programme, because they considered it to be a low and purely mimetic art form that threatened the autonomy of painting.⁴⁴ Although Futurist experiments with photography had been carried out by Anton Giulio Bragaglia and his brother Arturo Bragaglia since 1911, the Bragaglias' photographs were excluded from the exhibition of Futurist work that opened on 21 February 1913 at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, and they were officially ousted from the Futurist group in an 'Avviso' [Notice] in

⁴¹ Monroe, 'Poets and Public', p. 6.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 185.

⁴⁴ See Giovanni Lista, *Futurism and Photography* (London: Merrell Publishers, 2001), p. 80.

Lacerba in October 1913.⁴⁵ In fact, photography was only tacitly accepted as an art form in Futurism with the publication of the manifesto ‘La Fotografia futurista’ [‘Futurist Photography’] (11 April 1930), most likely as a result of the success of the international exhibition *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart, Germany, which ran from 18 May to 7 July 1929. Futurism’s modern aesthetic thus incorporated mass cultural forms into an aesthetic programme in order to imbue art and literature with a broader universal appeal. In this interpretation of the Futurist programme, it is certainly possible to see a greater connection, and even a common aim, between Monroe, as a British modernist, and the Futurists, an Italian avant-garde group. Monroe’s need for a qualified mediator of poetry between the poet and the public is also expressed in Futurism, for as Marinetti writes in his manifesto ‘Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty’, published in *Poetry and Drama*:

It may be objected that free words, or wireless imagination, as conceived by me, need the assistance of special readers to be properly conveyed to the public. Although it does not disturb me whether or not I be comprehended by the general mass of the people, I must answer that the number of futurist reciters is steadily increasing, and, moreover, that any one of the famous poems in the traditional style itself also requires, if it is to be enjoyed, special treatment by a practiced speaker of verse.⁴⁶

The importance of public oral communities to Monroe and the Futurists, as well as their enthusiasm for large-scale verse publication, signals their intentions to remove literature from a privatised sphere of aesthetic reception into the public sphere.⁴⁷ Yet their emphasis on the importance of specialised figures to select and perform poetry indicates a concomitant need to retain poetry as part of an elite culture. This challenges Bourdieu’s model of a cultural field split between a strict opposition of large-scale and restricted production, for both Marinetti and Monroe aspired towards a

⁴⁵ Umberto Boccioni and others, ‘Avviso’, *Lacerba*, vol. 1, no. 19 (1 October 1913), p. 211 (p. 211).

⁴⁶ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty’, trans. by Arundel Del Re, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), p. 319–26 (p. 326).

⁴⁷ Mark S. Morrisson similarly argues that the Poetry Bookshop brought poetry readings ‘out of the Victorian parlor and in front of the public’. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, pp. 56–57.

mass public culture that is rooted in ‘pure’ art, and in which the poet remains an elite, guiding presence. This does not necessarily diminish the utopian premise of Monro’s cultural project, but it does indicate that his initial attraction to the movement was founded on an understanding of Futurism as part of a continuing attempt to recoup the role of the poet and author in the modern era. In Futurism, the masses, or *la folla* [the crowd], was an important concept that was derived from Gustave Le Bon’s *The Crowd* (1895). Le Bon’s text theorises that the crowd is composed of individuals who undergo a profound psychological transformation: they are united by a simplified idea or belief and become catalysts for revolutionary action. The crowd is thus celebrated but also disparaged as mediocre and non-intellectual, and must be galvanised by a leader who ‘serves them as guide’.⁴⁸ Thus, as Christine Poggi has written, the Futurist ‘embrace of the masses was always paradoxical, mediated by a Nietzschean cult of the superman, and filtered through an ideology that both celebrated and derided the crowd as a force of the future and regression to a primitive past’.⁴⁹ I will return to the importance of Nietzschean philosophy, both for Monro and the Futurists, in more detail in the third section of this chapter. For now, it is important to note that for both Monro and the Futurists the poet is idealised as a guide who, by the product of his will, may influence and determine the minds of the masses. Monro and Marinetti had very similar aims for the dissemination of poetry and they both recognised the importance of engagement with mass readerships and audiences, even, perhaps, at the expense of revolution in poetic form. Closer attention to the formal and thematic qualities of the Futurist publication demonstrates to what extent this poetry was fundamentally transitional in nature.

⁴⁸ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), p. 137.

⁴⁹ Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism*, p. 35.

II. Futurist Poetry in *Poetry and Drama*: Between Symbolism and Futurism

Monro and Marinetti's correspondence resulted in not only the publication of Futurist poetry specifically for an English readership, but also in Monro and the *Poetry and Drama* set's self-identification as Futurists. However, the five poems that were published in the issue of *Poetry and Drama* are notable not for their translation of Futurist theory into practice, but rather for the disjunction they convey between the two. They do not, as the first Futurist manifesto expresses, 'sing the great masses shaken with work, pleasure, or rebellion', nor do they treat themes of industry or the machine, nor the 'imminent and inevitable identification of man and motor', as Marinetti writes in 'Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine', which had been published two years earlier in *Le Futurisme* (1911).⁵⁰ On the whole, the poetry seems to undermine the radical manifestos of the Futurist group, many of which had already been published in England. While expressing Futurist themes, they conform to a Symbolist language and poetic form, and I argue that Monro was keen to present Futurism as a development of this poetic tendency. These issues are also, as I demonstrate, at play in Flint's analysis of the movement in the *Poetry Review* the previous year, in 1912.

The five Futurist poems were all translated into English from the original French or Italian by Monro.⁵¹ First was 'Hymn to the Spirit of the New Poetry' by Paolo Buzzi. Next was 'Against the Earth' by Marinetti, a poem that had first appeared in his collection *Destruction*. The publication date for this poem is given in

⁵⁰ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 51; F. T. Marinetti, 'L'homme multiplié et le règne de la Machine', in *Le Futurisme* (Paris: Sansot, 1911), pp. 70–81. English translation: F. T. Marinetti, 'Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine', in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 89–92 (p. 90).

⁵¹ Monro would have spoken Italian, having lived in Florence, Italy, from October 1910 until April 1911. It was during this period that he met Del Re. See Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age*, pp. 80–85.

Poetry and Drama as 1911, although the collection had actually first appeared in French in 1904. ‘The Clock’ by Aldo Palazzeschi came next, followed by ‘Song of the Imprisoned’, again by Buzzi. Last was ‘Against Syllogisms’ by Marinetti, taken from his much longer poem *La Conquête des Étoiles* [The Conquest of the Stars], which had first been published in French in 1902. All, except ‘Against the Earth’, had featured in *I Poeti Futuristi*. Towards the end of the issue, separated by some pages from the poetry, Monro published Marinetti’s literary manifesto ‘Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty’, which was translated by Del Re. This manifesto is now most often translated into English as ‘Destruction of Syntax — Radio Imagination — Words-in-Freedom’.⁵²

Most, if not all, of the poems are notable for their Symbolist style and their treatment of manifestly Decadent themes and tropes. In June 1913, in the issue preceding the journal’s publication of Futurist poetry, a review on contemporary Italian poetry by Del Re explained Futurist poetry to the journal’s readers as a form of *vers libre*, or free verse, that based ‘itself on the formulas dictated by Gustave Kahn’, the French Symbolist writer and art critic who was a significant influence on Marinetti. Del Re writes:

Self-advertisement, organisation, persecution, and the power and vitality of their message have won the battle. The most conservative of publishers is publishing Paolo Buzzi’s last volume. The *Antologia dei Poeti Futuristi* has reached its thirty-third volume. If no other proof were needed that Italy is alive to poetry for poetry’s sake, as perhaps never before, this remarkable book would prove it. It is the *Ars Poetica* of Futurism, and contains the work of some thirteen poets, all reaching a very high standard of achievement, worthy each of attentive study.⁵³

There is a concerted attempt here to present Futurism as a literary movement that would appeal to more traditional readers by linking it closely with the literature of the

⁵² See Marinetti, ‘Destruction of Syntax — Radio Imagination — Words-in-Freedom’, pp. 143–51.

⁵³ Arundel del Re, ‘Italian Chronicle’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 2 (June 1913), pp. 232–37 (p. 236).

late nineteenth century.⁵⁴ ‘Poetry for poetry’s sake’ closely replicates the phrase ‘art for art’s sake’, the mantra that emerged as a rallying cry in nineteenth-century France, and which was also central to the British Aesthetic movement. It is thus significant that much of the other literature that *Poetry and Drama* published was Symbolist in nature: the same issue, for example, featured two new poems by the Belgian Symbolist poet Emile Verhaeren (1855–1916), and an article titled ‘Emile Verhaeren: An Appreciation’.⁵⁵

Buzzi’s ‘Hymn to the Spirit of the New Poetry’, the first of the Futurist poems to be published in the issue, is interesting for the transitional poetic form it conveys:

I too have loved women and ancient graveyards:
Then poetry was
To sip the anaemic and delicate gall of the spirit
Along the large open pages of mouldering tombstones
In some necropolis, safe amid perfumes of violets and of memories
And the tender hair of dead women
Such things as brought tears to the eyes and felicitous rhymes to the mind

But now I feel a new sunlight shining on my heart,
And a marvellous song in the deep

Therefore it is lovely to sing
As the madman sings
Who, close in his tiny cell
Uplifts from morning till evening
The sobbing spring of his soul
And casts it in a rapturous jet to his brothers the stars.⁵⁶

The theme is, in a broad sense of the term, Futurist, since it narrates a move from decay and stillness to an aesthetic of action and vitality. However, it does so in

⁵⁴ This may be understood as a precursor to Eliot’s argument in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, in which he argues that a ‘historical sense’ of poetry is vital to the poet. This historical sense ‘involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.’ T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ [1920], in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 39–49 (pp. 40–41).

⁵⁵ The titles of Verhaeren’s poems were *L’Été* and *Narcisse*, which were grouped under the heading *Legendes des bois* [Legends of the Woods]. Emile Verhaeren, ‘Two New Poems’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 2 (June 1913), pp. 139–41. See also: Michael T. H. Sadler, ‘Emile Verhaeren: An Appreciation’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 2 (June 1913), pp. 172–79.

⁵⁶ Paolo Buzzi, ‘Hymn to the Spirit of the New Poetry’, trans. by Harold Monro, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), pp. 291–92 (p. 291).

language that is decidedly Symbolist and Decadent in nature. Buzzzi uses a number of Latinate words, which lend a literary, intellectual tone to the poem that seems anathema to the Futurist aim to appeal to a mass public readership. He also evokes perfumes, colours, flowers, and memories in a way that recalls Charles Baudelaire's (1821–1867) poem 'Correspondences' (1857);⁵⁷ and there is a certain preoccupation, at least in the early part of the poem, with decadently morbid images of 'mouldering tombstones', the 'necropolis', and 'the hair of dead women'. Even with the transition to vitality after the first stanza reproduced here, the notion of souls — an important concept in Symbolist literature — is used without irony, adjectives such as 'rapturous' convey a sense of poetic ecstasy, and the reference to the stars recalls the Symbolist motif used by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) in *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1897).⁵⁸ Further on in the poem, when ostensibly conveying his new, 'Futurist' state to the reader, Buzzzi writes:

Hast thou ever computed
The number of feet to the scansion
Of a jagged segment of lightning?
How many cesuras [*sic*]
Break the beat of a gust of the wind?⁵⁹

The publication of these poems is significant, as they were for British readers their first contact with Futurist poems in English translation. Yet it becomes a question as to why *Poetry and Drama* published these poems rather than, for example, the technically more innovative concrete poem 'Bombardement d'Andrinople', which represented the conflict of the First Balkan War (October 1912–

⁵⁷ Part of this poem reads: 'Odours there are, fresh as a baby's skin, | Mellow as oboes, green as meadow grass, | — Others corrupted, rich, triumphant, full, | Having dimensions infinitely vast, | Frankincense, musk, ambergris, benjamin, | Singing the senses' rapture, and the soul's.' Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondences', in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 19, ll. 9–14.

⁵⁸ At the end of *Un coup de dés*, Mallarmé's speaker watches a constellation appear in the sky. Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard', in *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, trans. by E. H. Blackmore and A. D. Blackmore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 139–59. English translation: 'A Dice Throw At Any Time Never Will Abolish Chance', pp. 161–81.

⁵⁹ Buzzzi, 'Hymn to the Spirit of the New Poetry', p. 292.

May 1913) from Marinetti's allegedly first-hand, eyewitness perspective.⁶⁰ The poem is conventionally dated to 1912, and it was certainly created after the 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' (11 May 1912) because the Balkan War began five months after that date.⁶¹ A manuscript copy of the French version of the poem, which was sent to Monro, is dated 1913.⁶² Moreover, one of the letters from Marinetti transcribed in the previous section mentions that he aimed to perform parts of the poem in London during his November 1913 visit. Another poem that appeared in the issue, Aldo Palazzeschi's 'The Clock', is particularly interesting in this regard, because much of it does not strike the reader as typically 'Futurist' even in much of its content. The poem explores, as Marinetti put it, the 'feverish and extreme anxiety of the *Self* striving to break its iron cage of determinism or fatality', through its portrayal of a man who breaks a clock to liberate himself from the oppression of time.⁶³ Part of the poem reads:

I bless that wise man who knows his hour to die
and I kneel at the feet of the man who can kill himself.
Wherefore do I wait?
Do I wait till my hairs one by one shall fall out,
all my lovely young hair
and my strong shining teeth?
Wait till a yellow disease
issue from some corner
despoil and filthy my white flesh
and hold it and cover it over?

⁶⁰ As Ton van Kalmthout has demonstrated, Marinetti did not in fact view the Balkan War first hand. Ton van Kalmthout, 'Futurism in the Netherlands, 1909–1940', *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, vol. 4, ed. by Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 165–201. See also Günter Berghaus, 'The Dramaturgy of Sound in Futurist Theatre', *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, vol. 5, Special Issue: 'Women Artists and Futurism', ed. by Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 541–49 (pp. 545–46).

⁶¹ The subtitle to the book *Zang Tumb Tuuum* is *Adrianopoli ottobre 1912*, hence the dating. See F. T. Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tuuum* (Milan: Edizione Futuriste di Poesia, 1914).

⁶² See F. T. Marinetti, 'Bombardement d'Andrinople' [1913]. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2.

⁶³ F. T. Marinetti, 'Il poeta futurista Aldo Palazzeschi', in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. by Luciano de Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), pp. 62–65 (p. 63). Translation by Beatrice Sica, 'Time and Space in the Writings of Marinetti, Palazzeschi, the Group of *L'Italia futurista*, and other Futurist Writers', in *The History of Futurism: The Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies*, ed. by Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, pp. 155–78 (p. 177).

Ah it is lovely to die with
 red flowers on the brow unwithered!
 Alas that rose most vermillion,
 how it withers, how it is blown
 on the pale cheek and white forehead!
 Oh from the highest of towers
 To give one's self up to the delight of the void,
 to fall into space,
 leaving only one stain
 of crimson behind on the earth!⁶⁴

Although Palazzeschi's narrator ultimately escapes the tyranny of the clock — and thus of time — by violently destroying it and staging a mock suicide, the poem is decidedly Decadent in nature, containing references to disease, ageing and death, and it constantly evokes a process of individual, bodily degeneration. Death is figured in this poem as a heightened state of being, and the comparison between the red rose and blood is Decadent in its aestheticisation of morbid themes. The reference to the 'yellow disease' is also highly reminiscent of the infamous yellow books in which Decadent verse of the 1890s was published.

Marinetti's poem 'Against Syllogisms' attacks the rationalism of positivist scientific thinking through his comparison of syllogisms — a process of logic in which two general statements lead to a more particular statement — to 'impotent fools, white-haired' men, who leer at 'slim graceful Truths like shy girls' but are unable to catch them.⁶⁵ The 'Truths' constantly elude the syllogisms' grasp, leaving only 'gold veils in the stern hands behind', while the syllogisms 'lick the tracks' of their feet.⁶⁶ The narrator, meanwhile, believes in 'nought else but that lighthouse, my Dream, | in nought else but its great eye of gold'.⁶⁷ There is a will to transcend the phenomenal world with the spiritual in this poem, and a belief that the greatest reality

⁶⁴ Aldo Palazzeschi, 'The Clock', trans. by Harold Monroe, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), pp. 297–300 (p. 299).

⁶⁵ F. T. Marinetti, 'Against Syllogisms', trans. by Harold Monroe, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), pp. 304–305, ll. 22–23, and l. 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 15, l. 23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 25–26.

lies in the realm of imagination and fantasy, rather than the material world. This striving towards the absolute is similarly present in Marinetti's poem 'Against the Earth', which originally formed the first of three parts of the epilogue to *Destruction*, 'Invocation à la Mer Vengeresse pour qu'elle me délivre de l'Infâme Réalité' [Entreaty to the Vengeful Sea to deliver me from Infamous Reality]. In the poem, the narrator imagines a journey on the ocean, the 'only path that can lead me into the infinite', to a place beyond the material world: the 'deep and lovely arc of the wonderful horizon | quivering over the far distance'.⁶⁸ The ocean is described as a powerful irrational force, a 'madness of great waters' that the poet may absorb, and he urges it to destroy the earth, which, of course, is a symbol of a reality from which the speaker urgently needs to withdraw.⁶⁹

In direct contrast to these poems, however, is Marinetti's 'Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty', which sets out a technical, theoretical proposition for how language is to be reformulated to correspond with the new 'Futurist sensibility', which 'has taken place since the great scientific discoveries' such as telegraphs and telephones, motor-cars, and newspapers.⁷⁰ This was not the first literary manifesto to have been published by the Futurists: the 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' came first, and this was quickly followed by 'A Response to Objections', published on 11 August 1912, which included Marinetti's poem 'Battle | Weight + Smell'. The contrast between this poem and the poems published in *Poetry and Drama* is immediately manifest:

machine guns = gravel + undertow + frogs Tinkling backpacks rifles cannons
scrap-iron atmosphere = lead + lava + 300 stenches + 50 perfumes pavement

⁶⁸ F. T. Marinetti, 'Against the Earth', trans. by Harold Monroe, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), pp. 293–96 (p. 293), l. 11 and ll. 18–19.

⁶⁹ Ibid., l. 59.

⁷⁰ Marinetti, 'Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty', p. 319.

mattress debris horse-dung carcasses flick-flack to crowd together camels
donkeys **boom-boooooom** sewer [...]⁷¹

As explicated in the first two literary manifestos, poetic language is here stripped back to its bare bones: Marinetti urged writers to abolish punctuation, as well as adverbs and adjectives, and advised that verbs should not be conjugated in order to give a ‘sense of the continuity of life and the elasticity of the intuition that perceives it’.⁷² Prepositions were to be replaced by mathematical signs and musical notations, and nouns were to be immediately followed by another noun, with no conjunctions to separate them. The ‘Wireless Imagination’ manifesto took these ideas a step further by announcing the poetic form ‘words at liberty’ (or words-in-freedom), which was designed to replace Symbolist free verse poetry. Marinetti also declared that poetry should make use of onomatopoeia, experimental typography, and a free and expressive orthography.

Even in the ‘Technical Manifesto’ Marinetti had advised that writing should ‘not be subordinated to the I of the writer who observes or imagines’, and that the poet must ‘[d]estroy the “I” in literature: that is, all psychology’.⁷³ This implicit attack on Symbolist poetry, although predating the *Poetry and Drama* publication, does not seem to have affected the publication of Futurist poetry that used, to a great extent, the Symbolist, poetic “I” in its writing. In this regard it is also particularly notable that the version of the ‘Destruction of Syntax’ manifesto that appears in *Poetry and Drama* does not include the sub-section ‘Death of Free Verse’, in which Marinetti argues that the ‘defects’ of the Symbolist verse form were that it ‘fatally impels the poet toward the facile effect of sonorousness [*sic*]’, and ‘artificially channels the

⁷¹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘A Response to Objections’, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 125–29 (p. 128).

⁷² Ibid., p. 120.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 119–20 and p. 122.

current of lyrical emotion between the banks of syntax and the weirs of grammar'.⁷⁴

This section was most likely to have been redacted by Monro, and not Marinetti, as Marinetti had little editorial control in the publication.

To the extent that early Futurist poetry did constitute a continuation of the Symbolist aesthetic, the poems published in *Poetry and Drama* may be identified as Futurist: however, it is equally clear that Futurism had moved on from a Symbolist aesthetic by 1912. The publication of these poems, however, reveals two things. Firstly, it shows a Futurism that is certainly more in flux between modernist experimentation and late nineteenth-century styles of literature, which are inherently Symbolist in their will to transcend the phenomenal with the spiritual, than the Italian Futurists would themselves have liked to suggest. While celebrating broadly Futurist subjects, these are integrated into Symbolist and Decadent contexts, and the poems are all characterised by a lyrical subjectivism. Davide Podavini has commented on the Decadent and 'crepuscular' themes of *I Poeti Futuristi*, noting that the anthology must be seen as 'a case of poetry in progress, transitory, source of changes and a needed moment of transition'.⁷⁵ But the publication also suggests that despite Monro's attraction to Futurism because of its philosophy of vitality, health, and action, he found that connecting Futurism to a nineteenth-century literary heritage was necessary to make the movement accessible to a British readership. By acting as conduit for the Futurist movement in England, Monro's concern was to posit new ways of reconnecting English literature to life, but it was to do so in a way that anchored it to the traditions of the past. Unlike Italy, England was not in need of a

⁷⁴ Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax—Radio Imagination—Words-in-Freedom', p. 146.

⁷⁵ Davide Podavini, 'The Anthology *Poeti futuristi*: Poetry of Transition', in *The History of Futurism: The Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies*, ed. by Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, pp. 33–52 (p. 49). See also François Livi, *Tra crepuscolarismo e futurismo: Govoni e Palazzeschi* (Milan: IPL, 1980). The relationship between crepuscular and Futurist poetry has also been discussed by Danila Cannamela, in 'What is a Little Thing?: Crepuscular Still Lives and the Italian Avant-Garde', *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 24, no. 4 (November 2017), 841–66.

complete renovation of political and cultural institutions, and so the radical measures of modernisation implicit in words-in-freedom were not felt to be a necessary process for English national institutions. Thus, Monro's desire to 'lift the eyes from a sentimental contemplation of the past' is certainly a force in these poems, but it is framed within a Symbolist rhetoric and poetic form that grounds it firmly within a late nineteenth-century tradition.

The extent to which a late-Symbolist language and form was preferred by this English network to that of Marinetti's radical upheaval of language through 'words-in-freedom' is most apparent in Monro's statement in *Poetry and Drama*'s following issue. Written after Marinetti's readings at the Poets' Club and the Poetry Bookshop, at which Marinetti performed parts of his poem 'Bombardement d'Andrinople', Monro stated: 'We admire his extraordinary inventiveness; we were enthralled by his declamation; but we do not believe that his present compositions achieve anything more than an advanced form of verbal photography'.⁷⁶ Monro's comparison between photography and words-in-freedom suggests a similar relationship between the two as that posited by the Futurists between painting and photography in their rejection of the Bragaglias' photodynamism. The autonomy of literature is endangered by words-in-freedom, because it would allow any layperson or non-intellectual to write poetry, thereby threatening the uniquely creative role of the author. Commentary on words-in-freedom can also be seen in the critical writings of Flint, who was, as has been argued, a major force in *Poetry and Drama*: an autodidact, he was also one of the most well-respected critics of French literature in England, and an important contributor to the Imagist movement. In the 'French Chronicle' section of the Futurist issue of *Poetry and Drama*, Flint gave an ambivalent response to the poetry of words-

⁷⁶ Harold Monro, 'The Origin of Futurism', *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 4 (December 1913), p. 389 (p. 389).

in-freedom. Quoting parts of ‘Battle | Weight + Smell’, he commented that: ‘I am afraid that M. Marinetti’s later manifestoes on the technics of futurist literature are likely to ruin futurism’.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Flint also wrote that:

People may laugh at M. Marinetti; but if they will take the trouble to consider his theories without prejudice — it is very stupid to have literary prejudices — they might profit; and the beginning of the new art that is to fit in with the future mind, modified with machinery, might be made. Without going so far as M. Marinetti, we may ask ourselves what is the use, for example, of logical syntax in poetry? Why should we have so absolute a respect for the integrity of words? Whether poetry will not finally develop into a series of emotional ejaculations, cunningly modulated, and coloured by a swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies? Are we not really spellbound by the past, and is the *Georgian Anthology* really an expression of this age? I doubt it. I doubt whether English poets are really alive to what is around them. And, to betray myself completely, whether, perhaps, it is worth while [*sic*] being so alive. It is a question to consider and thresh out. There are so many old emotions to which we cling that it is legitimate to pause before we set out to transform ourselves into the fiends that M. Marinetti would have us to be, although it may be admirable to be a fiend.⁷⁸

Flint had previously given attention to Futurism in his well-received ‘Contemporary French Poetry’ issue of the *Poetry Review* in August 1912. Despite the use of the adjective ‘contemporary’, this issue comprised a sixty-page anthology that spanned from Baudelaire to more recent poets such as Valentine de Saint-Point (also an early Futurist), Jules Romains, and René Arcos. What is most interesting about the issue is the terminology that Flint uses in his attempts at literary taxonomy: as Vincent Sherry has recently noted, Flint goes to great lengths to avoid the term ‘Decadence’ in his description of the literary period. Beginning his article with a survey of poets writing in ‘the aftermath of Baudelaire, and recognizing that the most significant “new spirit” to have “found a voice was called decadent,” he relegates this designation immediately [...] to the status of a remainder: “It chose the designation *symbolist* as an alternative”’. As Sherry argues, Flint quickly accepts the alternative term ‘Symbolist’ but gives no explanation as to what precisely differentiated Symbolism from

⁷⁷ F. S. Flint, ‘French Chronicle’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1913), pp. 357–62 (p. 357).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 359–60.

Decadence.⁷⁹ While, to a certain extent, Flint differentiates the Symbolist generation from the ‘poets of to-day’, he also makes clear that Symbolism was not obsolete, but rather ‘in the process of evolution into other, different forms’.⁸⁰ In his following analysis of ‘some of the most representative poets of the present generation’ — the ‘Generation of 1900’ — it is then particularly significant that he devotes the last section of his review to ‘F. T. Marinetti and “Le Futurisme”’, thereby identifying the movement as an extreme and late example of the Symbolist literary tendency.⁸¹ The section includes abridged extracts from the 1909 Futurist manifesto, as well as lengthy quotations from Marinetti’s *Destruction*. Flint argued passionately against those who would criticise Futurism’s attack on cultural conventions: ‘No doubt Italy needed its Marinetti; and to those who cry out against a great wind for its destructiveness, one must answer that great winds are the necessary sanitation of the earth. Degeneration? Rubbish!’⁸² His positive identification of Futurism as a late-Symbolist movement, and his awareness of the accusations of degeneration against Futurism, posits a strong link between Decadence, Symbolism, and Futurism. Flint is demonstrably an admirer of Futurist work — he devotes a large section to Futurism in his review, while other major French poets, notably Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), are ignored — and thereby presents them as ‘representative’ of the current generation. However, it is in its ideas and tone that Futurism is seen to be representative, while its new formal and linguistic contributions, while not definitively rejected, are treated with some caution. And yet since the point of Flint’s issue was to suggest new directions in English poetry, and the issue was certainly a large formative influence on Imagism (which was

⁷⁹ Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 158. Here Sherry quotes F. S. Flint, ‘Contemporary French Poetry’, *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 8 (August 1912), pp. 355–414 (p. 357).

⁸⁰ Flint, ‘Contemporary French Poetry’, p. 355.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 362 and pp. 411–14.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 411.

a rather Francophile 'Imagisme' in its original spelling), it may be understood that Futurism, in its early forms, was posited as an important segue between nineteenth-century Symbolist and Decadent poetry and future modern English poetry.

Although Futurist ideas were promoted in *Poetry and Drama*, a journal in which Monro aimed to advocate similar themes of action and vitality in literature, the Symbolist language and form of the Futurist poems published and the redaction of Marinetti's 'Death of Free Verse' section from the 'Destruction of Syntax' manifesto display a different type of Futurism than was usually presented: one that is in a process of more gradual evolution from Symbolism. It indicates that Monro was presenting an idea of Futurism that was more in accordance with his own ideas of modern literature, and which would be more acceptable to an English readership.

III. Monro's Futurism

In March 1914, Monro described *Poetry and Drama* as a 'centre of experiment, a testing shop for the poetry of the present, and a medium for the discussion of tendencies which may combine to make the poetry of the future'.⁸³ His belief that he existed in a period that was undergoing a fundamental transformation prompted the conviction that new directions must be created in order for poetry to adequately convey lived experience in modernity. Precisely what this transformation constituted is never addressed explicitly in either the *Poetry Review* or *Poetry and Drama*; nevertheless, the notion that he lived in a time of deep-seated and irrevocable change is often expressed. This sense was not prompted by contact with the Futurists, but had been first articulated by Monro in his editorial to the June 1912 issue of the *Poetry*

⁸³ Harold Monro, 'New Books: English Poetry', *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 1914), pp. 52–62 (p. 62).

Review, which was devoted in its entirety to poetry of the 1890s and featured an article by Victor Plarr on Lionel Johnson (1867–1902; cousin to Lord Alfred Douglas and friend of Oscar Wilde), as well as the poetry of James Stephens (1882–1950). Responding to this literature, Monro writes: ‘Thus it came about that poetry entered virginal upon the twentieth century, and the poets of to-day find themselves suddenly emerging from a transition period, a strange world about them, a broken tradition behind, and a new one in the future to create.’⁸⁴ Although described as ‘emerging from’, it is important to recognise that Monro did not understand contemporary poetry to be completely divorced from this ‘transition period’ of the late nineteenth century, since literary experimentation was ongoing, and even, perhaps, incipient. He understood that the poet’s role was to respond to this new, ‘strange world’, and to develop an alternative poetic expression that would overturn the ‘broken tradition’ of nineteenth-century verse.

Hibberd has argued that Monro resisted the prescriptiveness of the self-conscious movements in which many pre-war writers and artists participated, and is thus distinguished from his contemporaries Pound and Lewis: Monro, he writes, ‘would not go beyond “certain general principles” or lay down rules for better writing’.⁸⁵ However, Monro also subscribed to many of the same ideas as Pound and Lewis, such as a desire to see approaches to poetry radically rethought in order to better express a quintessentially modern condition, and to employ a denser and more economic poetic language: as he stated in the first issue of the *Poetry Review*, poetry needed to be ‘packed and tense with meaning; no line may be thin, no link may rattle’.⁸⁶ He is also clearly a modernist cultural figure — rather than strictly a

⁸⁴ Harold Monro, ‘Editorial’, *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 6 (June 1912), pp. 247–51 (p. 248).

⁸⁵ Hibberd, ‘New Poetry, Georgians and Others’, p. 186.

⁸⁶ Harold Monro, ‘The Future of Poetry’, *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1912), pp. 10–13 (pp. 12–13).

Georgian — in the sense that he privileged a cosmopolitan approach to literature and formed an important part of transnational literary networks. But while Hibberd has argued that Monro would not support the idea of a manifesto for the ‘New Poetry’ or lay down rules for writing verse, Monro did write a manifesto, albeit more limited in scope and less prescriptive in its rubric than that of Futurist manifestos, which is based on a commitment to ‘remember’ and to ‘live’ in the future of ‘the earth’.⁸⁷ The idea of ‘the earth’, mentioned in both enumerated points, is of particular significance that points towards the importance of Nietzsche in Monro’s modernist ideology. While, then, Monro’s interest in the Futurists occurred perhaps principally as a result of enthusiasm for its cultural project of increasing public interest in poetry, it also stemmed from his enthusiasm for Nietzschean philosophy, which, as a great number of literary critics have noted, also had a significant impact on Marinetti’s Futurist programme and is particularly discernable in early Futurist texts.⁸⁸ Monro’s own interest in Nietzsche can be comprehensibly traced back to at least 1907, when he had sent his friend Maurice Browne a copy of his poem ‘The Superman’, written about ‘the man-god of the future.’⁸⁹ The ‘superman’ is clearly an English translation of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, which appears most famously in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.⁹⁰

Nietzsche’s influence on Futurism emerges particularly in the movement’s treatment of time, history, and the need to return to life against a Decadent rhetoric of

⁸⁷ Monro, ‘Varia’, p. 262.

⁸⁸ For extended discussions of Italian Futurism and Nietzsche see particularly: Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, pp. 104–7; Daniel Cottom, ‘Futurism, Nietzsche, and the Misanthropy of Art’, *Common Knowledge*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 87–97; Jennifer Griffiths, ‘Heroes/Heroines of Futurist Culture: *oltreuomo/oltredonna*’, in *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-Garde and its Legacy*, ed. by Elza Adamowicz and Simona Storchi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 27–37.

⁸⁹ Harold Monro to Maurice Browne, quoted in Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age*, p. 45.

⁹⁰ I use the term ‘superman’ rather than the technically more correct (and gender-neutral) translation ‘overhuman’ throughout this chapter, thereby reflecting Monro’s translation of the term. It seems possible that Monro first read Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the original German, as the only English translation of the text available in 1907 was the 1896 translation by Alexander Tille, which translates *Übermensch* as ‘beyond-man’, as opposed to ‘superman’. The later 1909 translation by Thomas Common translated *Übermensch* as ‘superman’.

cultural decline. This can be identified above all in the first Futurist manifesto of 1909, which attacks both the institutionalisation of art and the notion of a hierarchy of cultural value. In setting out his programme for the movement, Marinetti writes that:

It is from Italy that we are flinging this to the world, our manifesto of burning and overwhelming violence, with which we today establish "Futurism," for we intend to free this nation from its fetid cancer of professors, archaeologists, tour guides, and antiquarians.

For much too long Italy has been a flea market. We intend to liberate it from the countless museums that have covered it like so many cemeteries.⁹¹

The liberation of art from the oppressive weight of the past recalls sections from Nietzsche's philosophical novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, particularly, as Luca Somigli has noted, Zarathustra's 'new law', which instructs followers to 'overturn their old professorial chairs', and 'laugh at their great masters of virtue' and 'gloomy sages'.⁹² The moribund effect of established cultural institutions on the living is a crucial influence on the first manifesto, and through this created a fundamental opposition between past and present, in which the rhetoric of the future arises from the destruction of the past.⁹³

The same ideas can be identified in Monro's notion of a 'broken tradition', which attacks a past-oriented approach to literature common to the previous century. Futurism effects a reversal of the terms by which Decadent poets thought about the temporal, and this is most evident in the opposition they created between the concepts of the past and life. Decadent writers, broadly speaking, had in common the debilitating awareness that they existed at the end of the historical process: the decline or decay of western civilisation that was an inevitable consequence of its zenith: the progress that had been attained during the Enlightenment era. Sherry has written at length on the 'temporal imaginary' of decadence, which constitutes an 'experience of

⁹¹ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 52.

⁹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 214.

⁹³ Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 113.

historical time in a sort of posterior sense', and which rejects any notion of 'temporal progressiveness' or possible future advancement.⁹⁴ To ascertain this, we have only to consider the writing of Baudelaire, whose preoccupation with memory and the passing of time is clearly articulated in *Les Fleurs du Mal*: 'Remember, Time is greedy at the game | And wins on every roll! perfectly legal | The day runs down; the night comes on; *remember!* | The water-clock bleeds into the abyss'.⁹⁵ For Baudelaire, poetry is above all concerned with capturing the memory of a significant moment in time that cannot be regained. The past, in the Decadent and Symbolist imagination, thus constantly invades the present moment, and the past is posited as superior to life. For the Futurists, on the other hand, the past is a force that suffocates and suppresses the present, and it is life instead that is superior to the past: as Marinetti puts it in his prose piece 'Let's Murder the Moonlight!' (1909), the aim of Futurism is 'to struggle brutally against the elderly, and to ridicule anything consecrated by time'.⁹⁶ Moonlight is a key symbol in Decadent literature, and is particularly conspicuous in Wilde's play *Salome* (1891; English translation 1893), in which parallels are continuously drawn between Salome and the moon, which denotes feminine sexuality and death. In Marinetti's formulation, moonlight becomes a symbol of cultural exhaustion — of that which is overused and clichéd in literature — and is replaced by the ur-modern tropes of technological modernity: the car, the aeroplane, and the telegraph.

The same literary trope can be found in Monro's poem 'The Moon-Worshippers' in *Before Dawn*, in which he refers to an unidentified 'they' — implicitly Decadent poets — who have 'rejected the delight of human will' and 'forsook the sunlit day', and have instead embraced 'marble stillness and the ghostly

⁹⁴ Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*, p. 33, p. 29, and p. 27.

⁹⁵ Baudelaire, 'The Clock', in *The Flowers of Evil*, pp. 161–63 (p. 163), ll. 17–20.

⁹⁶ F. T. Marinetti, 'Let's Murder the Moonlight!', in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 54–61 (p. 54).

moon'.⁹⁷ In much the same spirit as Futurism, the moon-worshippers of Monro's poem are frail, sickly, and decaying creatures, who are disparaged for their obsession with the past and their ineffective, culturally irrelevant mode of thought:

But they remain with white unfruitful thought,
And eyes turned backward to the past, alone.
The living future is to them as nought;
And when joy rushes singing forth, they moan.⁹⁸

Disregarding the rather turgid rhyme scheme and meter of the poem, its concern with time and cultural vigour renders it approximate to Futurism: it seems highly likely that Monro had read 'Let's Murder the Moonlight!' before its composition. The moon is also feminised in Monro's poem, and the new generation, whom Monro terms the 'children of the light', are strong and youthful, and look towards the future. Decadent figures are explicitly denied knowledge, in this poem, of 'the meaning of the earth'.⁹⁹ An allegory of the cultural climate in which Monro was writing, 'The Moon-Worshippers' asserts that 'no moon, however holy, can atone | For earth, its sacred beauty and splendid sun'.¹⁰⁰ Despite the poem's lack of industrial tropes, its treatment of Futurist themes of life and vitality within a Decadent context aligns it with early Futurist poems, and it may even be identified as an English Futurist poem.

For Monro, Futurism facilitated a means by which a 'return to life' might be facilitated; it also constituted an aestheticisation of the philosophy of Nietzsche, who posits a link between the past and cultural exhaustion. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the Prophet, a figure based on the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, is a prominent symbol of cultural fatigue. By contrast, the demand to 'live unhistorically', as Nietzsche puts it, is a major influence for Marinetti's statement, in the first Futurist

⁹⁷ Harold Monro, 'The Moon-Worshippers', in *Before Dawn: Poems and Impressions* (London: Constable, 1911), pp. 5–8 (p. 5), l. 1, l. 4, l. 5, and l. 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6, ll. 43–46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7, l. 78 and p. 5, l. 24.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7, ll. 67–68.

manifesto, that: ‘Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, for we have already created velocity which is eternal and omnipresent.’¹⁰¹ This absence of time — and an emphasis upon the present moment — is conspicuous throughout the Futurist programme: as Umberto Boccioni and others declare in ‘Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto’, and reiterate in ‘The Exhibitors to the Public’: ‘We are the Primitives of a new sensibility’.¹⁰² ‘Primitive’ does not, in this instance, come with a connotation of being applied to *someone* or *something else* to suggest ‘unspoiled’, or, conversely, ‘crude and undeveloped’; certainly, it does not denote a pre-industrial mode of being. Instead, it is a threat of barbarism: as Michael Bell writes, of ‘that which follows and destroys a civilization’.¹⁰³ In this sense, then, the word does not imply a regressive, past-looking outlook, but rather one that is ahistorical in its temporal positioning: civilisation, the very awareness of the past and being of a historical process, is abjured in favour of primitivism, which, as Bell writes, ‘may not just have a backward vista, whether nostalgic or condescending, but a forward and utopian one’.¹⁰⁴ Futurism constitutes itself as a new movement: a movement, furthermore, that will be short-lived because of its very emphasis on futurity:

When we are forty, others who are younger and stronger will throw us into the wastebasket, like useless manuscripts. — We want it to happen!

They will come against us, our successors; they will come from far away, from every direction, dancing to the winged cadence of their first songs, extending predatory claws, sniffing doglike at the doors of the academies for the good smell of our decaying minds, long since promised to the libraries’ catacombs.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’, in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 57–123 (p. 63), quoted in Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist*, p. 115; Marinetti, ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’, p. 51.

¹⁰² Umberto Boccioni and others, ‘Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto’, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 64–7 (p. 67).

¹⁰³ Michael Bell, ‘Primitivism: Modernism as Anthropology’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. by Brooker, Gasiorek, Longworth, and Thacker, pp. 351–67 (p. 354).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Marinetti, ‘Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’, p. 53.

Monro felt that the philosophy of Nietzsche, in its overriding concern with time and change, was particularly apt for the modern period. The sense of individual and national decline that was present in the last years of the nineteenth century persisted into the early twentieth, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter. For Monro, Futurism therefore posed a means of subverting 'Decadent' themes and moving towards a more utopian worldview. However, Monro's identification with the movement was also to a great extent based on a misguided understanding of Nietzsche's importance to the cultural project of Futurism. His initial supposition was that Futurism had a rigorous understanding of Nietzschean philosophy, whereas, in actual fact, the Futurists used a very basic and generalised grasp of Nietzsche's theories to inform their movement.

Monro's enthusiasm for Nietzsche emerges above all from an idea of the superman that is inherently connected to ideas of life and the 'earth'. For Nietzsche, the superman is an allegory for human existence that has purged itself of notions associated with Platonism and Christianity, that understands itself and the world through the essential principle of the will to power, and that has accepted the notion of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche is therefore not speaking of an individual or a set of individuals when he speaks of the superman, but of a fundamental transformation of the mode of existence of the human species. In section three of the prologue, Zarathustra declares:

Behold, I teach you the Superman.
The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!
I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes!
[...] To blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful offence, and to esteem the bowels of the Inscrutable more highly than the meaning of the earth.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 42.

There is a contrast in this passage between the superman as the ‘meaning of the earth’, and those that preach ‘superterrestrial’ or over-earthly ‘hopes’. Nietzsche preaches a philosophy of immanence as opposed to transcendence: if there is a meaning to life, it is to be discovered in the here and now of the existing phenomenological world. It is not to be found in ‘either a transcendent God (Christianity) or in an idea of the good or justice that is independent of existing things (Platonism)’, since both ‘create values out of the initial rejection or inversion of some other value, or the rejection of some aspect of existence’.¹⁰⁷ Thus, to ‘blaspheme the earth’ is a terrible offence because it is equivalent to blaspheming life, and ‘both Platonism and Christianity celebrate and long for death’.¹⁰⁸ Standing against the notion of an ontologically transcendent domain, Nietzsche rejects anything that finds meaning in the otherworldly.

Following Nietzsche, Monro rejects the concepts of god, heaven, hell, and transcendence — or, as he terms it in his own manifesto, ‘personal immortality’ — and instead promotes the meaning of human life as the ‘meaning of the earth’. His concept of Futurism is based on a vision of ‘the beautiful Future’: a modern utopia in which, informed by evolutionary discourses and Nietzschean philosophy, man would reach the apotheosis of his natural development. Marinetti also drew heavily on Nietzsche’s superman, and this is particularly evident in his play *Le Roi Bombance* (1905) and his novella *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909): in the latter, the character Gazourmah is an imagined fusion of man and machine who goes beyond conventional morality and achieves immortal status (he can even fly). However, as Jennifer Griffiths has argued, while Nietzsche’s concept of the superman arises through the ‘will’ as a mental ideal, Marinetti’s ‘*superuomo*’ represents a search for the physical

¹⁰⁷ Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 20–21.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

ideal of man who will not submit to the earth but rise above and beyond it'.¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche's superman does not seek a physical transcendence of the body but rather aims to master it: Marinetti, conversely, imagines the superman as a man-machine hybrid that overcomes the limits of the body through corporeal transformation. As he argues in 'Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine', the will is to be externalised in such a way that 'it is prolonged beyond himself like an immense, invisible arm', but this ability is associated with a new 'inhuman and mechanical type', who has organs 'adapted to the exigencies of an environment made of continuous shocks'.¹¹⁰

While receptive to Marinetti's Futurism, then, it may be speculated that Monro was disappointed by the fact that Italian Futurism was not as rigorously Nietzschean in its philosophical foundations as he had at first supposed. Futurism's fantasy of a future escape from nature and from the earth, and of its substitution of God with what was essentially an equivalent — an immortal, if mechanised, idol — was the most problematic aspect of the movement for which he felt an affinity. In the December 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama* Monro notably qualified his support in an article titled 'Futurism and Ourselves', writing that while the set 'have nothing but admiration for the courage of those men who [...] have blared the principles of their Futurism into the ears of their compatriots', he believed England did not need the radical upheaval of literature that Italy required: 'it is essential for us to be allowed to solve our own problems in our own manner. The Latin temperament is not ours, and its present violent materialism will fail to find permanent footing here'.¹¹¹ Monro also emphasised, in a separate article, what he understood to be the anti-cosmopolitan

¹⁰⁹ Griffiths, 'Heroes/Heroines of Futurist Culture: *oltreuomo/oltredonna*', p. 32.

¹¹⁰ Marinetti, 'Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine', pp. 90–91.

¹¹¹ Harold Monro, 'Futurism and Ourselves', *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 4 (December 1913), pp. 390–91 (p. 390 and p. 391).

nature of Marinetti's programme, stating that 'in its origin the Futurist movement was avowedly Italian and for the Italians, rather than cosmopolitan in its aim'.¹¹² This was, of course, directly opposed to Monro's conception of a modern literature that would absorb influences from other cultures and languages: Monro's understanding of the cosmopolitan was not one that could be belied by nationalism. But while Monro's rejection of Futurism is given principally as a consequence of his realisation of differences in national temperament, it is unquestionably also philosophical differences that are at the centre of the issue.

This argument is cemented by an article by Monro published in the *Daily Herald* on 10 December 1913, written following Marinetti's lecture at the Poetry Bookshop on 18 November. Monro argued that 'the Futurist movement appearing to be one of considerable importance, I have made every effort to try and understand it, and for the benefit of such members of the English public as may desire enlightenment on such matters': however, he subsequently writes that 'my own opinions coincide only to a very limited degree with those of the Italian Futurists'. Concluding his article, Monro writes:

I must admit that I myself am more a Nietzschean than a Futurist. I find any section of 'Zarathustra' far more beautiful than the most beautiful of the Futurist poems, but that does not preclude me from attempting to understand the Futurists, who constitute, so far as I can judge, by far the most active and daring rebel force of modern Europe.¹¹³

Monro's explanation in this article confirms the philosophical underpinnings of his disillusionment with the movement. This was not to go unnoticed in the British press: on 18 December 1913, a writer identified only as 'A Working Man' comments on the strangeness of Monro's sudden rejection of Futurism: 'I am positive that every reader of that article regarded it as an enthusiastic advocacy of Futurism. Now he blows

¹¹² Monro, 'The Origin of Futurism', p. 389.

¹¹³ Harold Monro, 'About Marinetti', *Daily Herald*, 10 December 1913, p. 3.

strangely cold.’ Yet the writer also finds Monroe’s rejection of the movement’s tenets plausible, because Futurism undermines the Nietzschean commitment to life. Under a subheading to the same article, titled ‘The Scent of Decadence’, the correspondent states: ‘Mr. Monroe admits that he is more of a Nietzschean than a Futurist. I commend him to Dr. Oscar Levy, who, referring to this controversy, writes in the “New Age”:

“A True Nietzschean at once scents the decadence of Futurism: he likewise knows whence the decadence arises.”’¹¹⁴ Futurism is thus understood to form part of the crisis of decadence it professes to abjure.

The nationalist and somewhat reactionary nature of Futurism was not a concern that was first raised after the publication of Futurist poetry in *Poetry and Drama*, or after Marinetti’s lecture at the Poetry Bookshop, but rather in the same issue of *Poetry and Drama* in which the Futurist poems were published. In the September 1913 article ‘Futurist Poetry’ Monroe wrote that ‘in spirit it is local, confessedly patriotic; its application to Italy being far more obvious than to other countries.’ Moreover, he writes: ‘They are alive, terribly alive, and hyperconscious in every nerve. But, as we find suggested again and again in their work, their futurism is the result of a reactionary disgust with life and with the earth.’¹¹⁵ Monroe proclaims Marinetti’s Futurism to be outdated, even passéist, since ‘their futurism’ was incapable of truly mastering the physical realities of the body in the fashion of the superman. In doing so, Monroe implies that the *Poetry and Drama* set was the sole, legitimate ‘Futurist’ group, since only they desired to ‘remain true’ to the earth.

¹¹⁴ A Working Man, ‘Reply to Harold Monroe’, *Daily Herald*, 18 December 1913, p. 4. Oscar Levy edited and oversaw the translation of Nietzsche’s works into English, which were published in eighteen volumes between 1909 and 1913.

¹¹⁵ Monroe, ‘Futurist Poetry’, p. 264.

IV. Afterlives of Futurism

Monro's relationship with Marinetti is an important point of intersection between English modernism and Italian Futurism. Although it first appears that the collaboration between the two writers, publishers, and promoters did not advance much beyond the single issue of *Poetry and Drama*, further research points towards a mutual interest extending both prior to and after the publication of this issue. Monro's initial interest can be seen to have formed during his tenure as editor of the *Poetry Review*, in 1912, particularly with his publication of Flint's issue 'Contemporary French Poetry'. The identification of this year as the beginning of Monro's interest in Futurism is bolstered by the fact that Monro had also been linked in the British press to Futurist tendencies in the same year: a year and a half *before* the Futurist issue of *Poetry and Drama* was published. His poetry collection *Before Dawn* was reviewed by Abercrombie in the *London Daily News* in February 1912, who wrote:

We do not know whether Mr. Harold Monro is professedly a Futurist, though that certainly seems indicated by the dedication of his 'Before Dawn.' But Futurism is only a symptom of modern poetry's desire to escape from exquisite seclusion; and that, undoubtedly, is a characteristic of Mr Monro's earnest and vehement work. [...] at least such poetry will be vigorous, determined, and athletic; its significance will not need to be allegorised in order to become applicable to ourselves; its appeal will be direct and immediate.¹¹⁶

Abercrombie points to a broader definition of Futurism in his review as a modern poetic tendency to escape 'exquisite seclusion' and to write in a spirit of youth, vigour, and anticipation of the future, and one that is symptomatic of a modern condition. It is similar to Monro's own later characterisation of Futurism in *Poetry and Drama* as 'an attitude of mind, a condition of soul — it exists ultimately in a world of thought, imagination, and hope'.¹¹⁷ Monro was also careful to draw clear

¹¹⁶ Lascelles Abercrombie, 'Books of the Day: Past and Present: Futurism', *London Daily News*, 27 February 1912, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Monro, 'Varia', p. 262.

lines between the Futurism of the Italian Futurists and a broader conception of Futurism: 'their futurism' is opposed to 'our Futurism', and it is particularly noticeable that Monro uses the lower case for Marinetti's movement, while the upper case 'Futurism' is reserved for Monro's own movement, along with the possessive pronoun.¹¹⁸ Thus divorced from its specifically Italian roots, Futurism takes on a life of its own in a way that becomes international, and as such, applicable to English writers.

English writers in London's literary milieu were clearly moving towards a 'rebirth' of English poetry in the years before the First World War. The rhetoric of Monro's editorial of the June 1912 issue of the *Poetry Review*, which stated that English poetry entered 'virginal' upon the twentieth century, with 'a broken tradition behind, and a new one in the future to create', stands in contrast to Monro's later statement in *Poetry and Drama* that 'English poetry has not stood still since the days of the Elizabethans'.¹¹⁹ In the light of the former statement, the latter takes on the qualities of a somewhat defensive reaction to the fervent patriotism of Italian Futurism.

Monro may not be engaging with Futurism in the manner that other writers were, perhaps especially Lewis, Pound, and the Vorticists. Produced during an earlier period than that particular manifestation of Futurism, Monro's work and presentation of Futurism for an English audience is notable for its absence of radical typographical experimentation and lack of nationalist rhetoric. However, it is precisely for these reasons that Monro's involvement in Futurism and his mediation of the movement for English readers is highly significant: it demonstrates another aspect of Futurism that was equally important in England, and which speaks more to the transitional moment

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 262; Monro, 'Futurist Poetry', p. 264.

¹¹⁹ Monro, 'Editorial', p. 248; Monro, 'Futurism and Ourselves', p. 390.

in which a number of English writers found themselves in the first decades of the twentieth century. Futurism, in this analysis, links nineteenth-century verse forms with themes of the return to life, vitality, and action, and although Monro argued that Futurism was ‘for the Italians’, Futurist ideas are disseminated and reconfigured by Monro in a way that allows them to be more closely related to issues emerging in a specifically English genealogy of literature. While, therefore, there was a short moment of actual intersection between the two movements, there remained a British inflection of Futurism long after the Futurists left England.

The idea of what Futurism might be if it were based in England was a subject of some uncertainty in 1913. Following Marinetti’s reading at the Poets’ Club in November 1913, *The Times* reports, in a manner that suggests a paraphrasing of Marinetti, that the Futurists ‘were to be found everywhere; in England they were represented by H. G. Wells’.¹²⁰ However, the Imagist issue of the *Egoist*, published in May 1915, points towards a more concrete understanding of Futurism in England. Monro’s article for this issue, ‘The Imagists Discussed’, is particularly enlightening in this regard:

Unlike the Italian Futurists, they [the Imagists] remained uncertain how much of the past had to be condemned; indeed I don’t think they ever came to an agreement on this point. Most of them soon, however, rejected the sonnet, and the conventional stanza forms which appeared to have been imported or manufactured to serve the requirements of a certain limited epoch or period, and had now, also, become tainted beyond all further use by these feeble poetasters having made of them veritable moulds for their *clichés*. A large number of the French younger poets, they discovered, had long ago abandoned the traditional verse-forms; a powerful Italian school also existed which was waging one of the most violent revolutions in the annals of literature. They hastened to study first these new French, later these new Italian poets. ‘Eureka,’ they cried.¹²¹

Monro is careful to downplay the role of Futurism in the formation of Imagism in this article: the Futurists are mentioned by name only when Monro speaks of the

¹²⁰ ‘Futurism in Poetry’, p. 5.

¹²¹ Harold Monro, ‘The Imagists Discussed’, *The Egoist*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1 May 1915), pp. 77–80 (p. 78).

differences between the two schools, whereas when talking about Futurism's importance to the Imagist group's aesthetic practice they are referred to almost anonymously as 'a powerful Italian school'. In spite of this, Monroe unquestionably highlights the significance of Futurism to the development of Imagism, even going so far as to characterise Imagism as a British Futurist group, since 'they imitated them; many of their first poems were, or, at any rate, read like, translations'.¹²² In fact, Imagist concerns to avoid cliché and to 'describe their rapid impressions [rather] than faithfully to record their abiding sentiments', and their method 'to model little detached patterns of words' suggest broadly Futurist aims and a refinement of the Futurist technique of analogy. While a number of Imagist poets were quick to dismiss the notion of a Futurist influence on the group, Monroe clearly understands Futurism to be an important transitional movement for the development of Anglo-American literature.

The connection between these new forms of English poetry and older French and more recent Italian poetry is made explicit here. It suggests that Monroe and Flint's 'Contemporary French Poetry' issue is crucial to the formation of Imagist poetry. As Futurism was heralded as the most recent manifestation of the loosely identified French literary movement, and at once an anti-Decadent and Decadent movement, it follows that Futurism is a crucial source for Imagism. Futurism points to a way forwards for British writers, and Monroe is a crucial aspect of that European nexus.

Although it is often thought that Monroe's move away from Italian Futurism in the December 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama* constituted a complete, indiscriminate rejection of the movement, there is evidence to suggest that Monroe continued to

¹²² Ibid.

maintain an interest in Futurism for the rest of his life. A letter from Marinetti, sent to Monro in November 1923, indicates that the two had planned to meet again in the winter of that year in London, prior to which Marinetti asked Monro to write to him ‘de me renseigner sur ce que l’on fait l’intéressant en littérature et surtout en poésie’ [to inform me on what we do that is interesting in literature and especially in poetry].¹²³

More significantly, Monro wrote an article titled ‘Poetry and the Industrial World’, which was published in the December 1930 issue of the *Highway*. Monro would die not long after this, in March 1932. Giving thought to the question of poets’ ability to adequately and truthfully convey lived experience in modernity, Monro argues that among contemporary poets there were three arguments regarding appropriate subjects for modern poetry: the sentimental ‘love in country lanes’ approach, which he attributes to poets such as W. H. Davies and Edmund Blunden; others who ‘would declare that any subject, poetically treated, can be turned to poetry’, such as John Masefield and Sir Henry Newbolt; and lastly, those who ‘would maintain that the old order must commit suicide, “giving place to new,” and that the subjects and methods of the past are utterly, hopelessly, incompatible with conditions of the present’.¹²⁴ Holding Futurism to exemplify the latter tendency, along with Apollinaire and the American poet Carl Sandburg, Monro writes that although Marinetti’s early work was written in a melodious free verse mode, he had soon found that method unsuited to conveying the experiences of modern life. His analysis is worth quoting at length:

¹²³ F. T. Marinetti to Harold Monro, 1 November 1923. Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Harold Monro Papers, Collection 745, Box 2. Unfortunately, there is no record of such a meeting in Monro’s diaries in December 1923, and his diary for 1924, if it existed, has not survived. Marinetti’s diaries for 1923 and 1924 have been lost or destroyed.

¹²⁴ Harold Monro, ‘Poetry and the Industrial World’, *The Highway: A Monthly Journal for the Education of the People* (December 1930), pp. 8–11 (p. 8).

He found it inadequate for descriptions of certain battles of the first Balkan war in which he had participated, for the rattle of machine guns, which had to be rendered onomatopœically, for the various phases of a bombardment, and descriptions of such scenes as the caving in under gunfire of pontoon-bridge-loads of Turkish soldiers, which had to be described chiefly by weight and number. In his volume *Zang-Tum-Tum* he brought his method to perfection (as the phrase goes), using a great number of typographical devices to describe the flights of aeroplanes, scattering words in different formats, upside down, sideways, and all over the page; and many devices were required also to illustrate and glorify the shriek of the industrial siren, the grind of the tram, the whirr and rattle of the machine, the life of the robot-worker, and the manufacturing towns of the modern world.

In direct contrast may be cited the method of the Belgian poet, Emile Verhaeren, whose fame, like that of Marinetti, is now a little faded. In his books *Les Villes Tentaculaires*, *La Multiple Splendour*, and others, he comes to grips with his problem. Already in his earliest works ‘love in country lanes,’ and kindred subjects, had received fierce, uncompromising treatment, and the broad vitality of his descriptions of peasant life still remains as new and remarkable in French verse now as at the date of publication. [...]

The point to be made is that in Marinetti and Verhaeren we have two poets who thought, in Mr. Hueffer’s words, ‘that there was never, as the saying is, such a chance for a poet,’ yet whose methods were totally different, the one literal, photographic, violent, crude; the other indirect, pictorial, calm, imaginative. Can we find in these islands equivalents for them or for the Americans, or the Germans, or the Russians — that is, any poets who have made a thorough effort to grapple with industrialism? I think not.¹²⁵

Despite being written seventeen years after his public renunciation of the group’s suitability for an English audience, Monro’s article indicates that his enthusiasm and interest in the movement had not diminished in the intervening years. He compares Marinetti and Verhaeren as poets who convey modern life as it exists in technological modernity, and while he still finds the Futurists to be ‘photographic’, there is a sense that it is above all in Belgian Symbolism and Italian Futurist literature that modern life is truly conveyed.

Conclusion

Poetry and Drama closed in December 1914, shortly after the outbreak of the First World War. It was initially intended only to be a brief suspension for one year until

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

early 1916, by which time it was hoped that the war would have ended. Monro wrote in the final issue of the journal that ‘it becomes increasingly evident that the attention of the public must inevitably remain fixed on one issue only — the preservation of National Liberty’, conditions that were not conducive to the consideration and production of literature and art, which ‘require leisure of mind’. Thus, the suspension of the periodical was ‘designed to last until we have been so fortunate as to regain that leisure’.¹²⁶ Although the journal’s closure was to be permanent, the Poetry Bookshop remained open for the war’s duration.¹²⁷ Monro’s pronouncements in the previous issue of September 1914 that ‘we find ourselves at this moment almost unprovided with verse that we should care to publish’ because ‘the sentiment of patriotism has never produced much poetry’ and ‘[m]odern warfare will be likely to produce less’ was of course directly opposed to Futurism’s aesthetic, because for the Futurists poetry was often an expression of war, whereas Monro maintained that good poetry could not be produced under such conditions.¹²⁸ For Monro, war ‘monopolises the brain’, with the result that the ‘imagination is over-excited, the judgement unbalanced’.¹²⁹ Clearly, in this aspect of Futurism and English literature at least, similarities are limited.

Nevertheless, Monro’s enthusiasm for the broader aims of the Futurist programme is unambiguous, and in this chapter I hope to have demonstrated that it was a much longer-lasting interest than is usually represented in literary criticism. The letters between Monro and Marinetti are perhaps few, and the actual collaboration in the pages of *Poetry and Drama* brief, but more sustained attention to the nature of the

¹²⁶ Harold Monro, ‘Announcement’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 2, no. 8 (December 1914), p. 322 (p. 322).

¹²⁷ The Poetry Bookshop moved premises to 38 Great Russell Street in 1926, but the shop closed in 1935, three years after Monro’s death.

¹²⁸ Harold Monro, ‘Varia’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 2, no. 7 (September 1914), pp. 250–54 (p. 250).

¹²⁹ Harold Monro, ‘New Books’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 2, no. 7 (September 1914), pp. 296–98 (p. 296).

collaboration, and to Monro's more general hopes for the future of poetry indicate that Monro's engagement with the Futurists emerged from a desire to transform the relationship between art and life. Specifically, this emerged through Monro's wish to increase the relevance of literature to modern life, and to engage more with the public through high publication numbers and oral performances of poetry.

Heightened attention to the publication of Futurist poetry in *Poetry and Drama* also radically transforms the general understanding of the nature of Futurist literature that was published in England before the war. The connections between Futurism's literary predecessors and their poetry are made manifest, and this becomes a point on which Monro is able to distance himself from the Milanese group, setting up for himself a new understanding of Futurism as a methodology and wider tendency of literary and artistic practice. It was a tactic that was also to be deployed the following year by Lewis in *Blast*.

'A Futurism of Place': Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism between Aestheticism and Futurism

In the months that followed Harold Monro's comparatively civil exchanges with the Futurists in the pages of *Poetry and Drama* in late 1913, a very different interaction with the movement began to take place in the newspapers and little magazines across England. The Vorticist movement appropriated Futurism's spirit of aggression, energy, and patriotism in order to provoke a modernisation of English art. Much like the Futurists, the Vorticists denied any influence from their national cultural past, positioning themselves firmly against the *fin de siècle* and the late Victorian era. Their first manifesto repudiated the years between 1837 and 1900, along with what was pejoratively termed the 'VICTORIAN VAMPIRE'.¹ Wyndham Lewis was particularly vocal in his repudiation of the late nineteenth century, which was for him a 'stagnant time after the full blast of Victorianism — surely one of the most hideous periods ever recorded'.² Ezra Pound, Lewis's ally in Vorticism, was equally dismissive of the legacy of Decadence: as early as 1909 he had claimed to '[r]evolt' against 'the crepuscular spirit in modern poetry', and declared his intention to 'shake off the lethargy of this our time' through his poetic practice.³ Pound was later, in 1918, to be perhaps one of the first people to employ the term 'Victoriana', using the word in order to denounce rather than celebrate the past. He wrote that for 'most of us, the odour of defunct Victoriana is so unpleasant [...] that we are content to leave

¹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto I', *Blast*, no. 1 (June 1914), pp. 11–28 (p. 13 and p. 11).

² Wyndham Lewis to Augustus John, Summer 1915, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963), pp. 70–72 (p. 70).

³ Ezra Pound, 'Revolt', in *Personae* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1909), pp. 53–54 (p. 53).

the past where we find it'.⁴ For Lewis and Pound, Victoriana, but particularly Decadence and Aestheticism, possess a lingering quality that they are anxious to be rid of.

However, in his 'Vortex' section of *Blast*'s first issue Pound notably included a sub-heading for 'ancestry', under which he listed the English Aestheticist Walter Pater's phrase: 'All arts approach the conditions of music'.⁵ This connection of Vorticism to Aestheticism, although seemingly anomalous, is in fact one of many such instances in *Blast*, which are to be identified not only in the very pages of the journal, but also in the networks and circles that went towards formulating its material and symbolic production. John Lane (1854–1925), the publisher of the Decadent journal the *Yellow Book* (1894–1897) was also the publisher of Vorticism's journal *Blast*; Oscar Wilde's literary executor Robert Ross (1869–1918) was in contact with Lewis during *Blast*'s publication; and meanwhile Herbert Horne (1864–1916), editor of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* (1884–1894), also took an interest in the developing movement. Vorticist figures positioned Aestheticism as their chief English adversary in *Blast*, but this obscures the many connections that exist between the two movements, and may be seen as a use of Futurist methods of avant-garde challenges to the dominant cultural orthodoxy to attain symbolic recognition in the existing cultural field. Indeed, one of the key arguments of this chapter is that Lewis was heavily connected to Aestheticist writers and cultural figures of the *fin-de-siècle* period, and that these Aestheticist figures were themselves interested in Lewis's new programme for English literature and art. In this sense, Vorticism cultivated a cultural project that was similar in many respects to that which had been fostered by

⁴ Ezra Pound, 'Books Current', *Future*, vol. 2, no. 10 (October 1918), pp. 265–66 (p. 265).

⁵ Ezra Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 153–54 (p. 154). Pound misquotes Pater's 'The School of Giorgione', however. The sentence should read: 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music'. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 124.

Aestheticism: one which has as its main concerns the relationship between art and life, and the role of the artist in the modern era. Aestheticism's attempts to separate art from life provoked great anxiety among cultural figures in the early twentieth century (and even, arguably, for the Aestheticists themselves), because the movement's bid for a completely autonomous art entailed both dehumanisation and a rejection of socially efficacious practices of art. Although Lewis's Vorticism is often aligned with T. E. Hulme's (1883–1917) concept of a detached and dehumanised modern art, as expounded in Hulme's lectures of the period and in his posthumous collection *Speculations* (1924), Lewis was much closer to pursuing Futurist conceptions of artistic re-attachment and re-engagement with the world. This is not to argue, however, that Lewis or the Futurists pursued an entirely heteronomous vision of artistic and literary creation, for despite turning to mass media forms they remained heavily invested in the idea of the autonomy of art and the importance of the specific role of the artist in modernity. In a second act of repudiation, Lewis castigates the Milanese Futurists for their supposedly mimetic conceptions of art, which negated the role of the artist. Distancing himself in these ways from Aestheticism and from Futurism, Lewis nevertheless engages on a significant level with both movements. The chapter concludes by focusing in detail on Lewis's short article 'Futurism, Magic, and Life', to demonstrate how, despite these repudiations, Lewis treads a delicate line between the two movements.

While Futurism's impact on Vorticism has been well studied in literary criticism, it remains for the movement's joint Aestheticist and Futurist tendencies to be discussed. This chapter therefore seeks to establish how Vorticism emerged within the English cultural field, tracing Aestheticist influences on Vorticism, and the Futurist themes it engages with to effect a transformation of English modernist

literature. This argues against analyses that simply characterise Vorticism as Futurism under another guise, and instead provides a more nuanced account of how Vorticism works with Futurist methods to create an English modernism, which develops from a principally English genealogy.

Lewis's activities in the cultural field of pre-war London demonstrate his understanding of the necessity of reacting aggressively against cultural orthodoxy, or the established avant-garde, in a bid for dominance in the cultural field of restricted production. In the first six months of 1914, during the period in which Vorticism was beginning to be formulated, largely in response to Futurism, Lewis referred to his promotional activities as necessary 'games', stating: 'I never had time to paint [...] I had been so busy massaging the British public'. He claims that he accepted this, for 'indirectly, it might serve the cause of a "rebel" or of "abstract" art and revolutionary letters'.⁶ Lewis confirms Peter Brooker's assertion that 'exhibitionist protests, the proclamations and manifestos, and the public appearance of the artist as "Artist"' all go towards gaining 'recognition in the public sphere'.⁷

Despite legitimate arguments for considerations of Vorticism that extend beyond Lewis, this chapter focuses principally on this proponent of the movement. Andrzej Gasiorek has rightly stated that 'accounts that focus only on Lewis conceal their [Vorticism and *Blast*'s] complex origins and varied practices'; however, it is also true that Lewis was, perhaps along with Pound, the most significant *writer* of Vorticism.⁸ Not only was Lewis the editor of both issues of *Blast*, but he was also the author of most of the movement's manifestos, its radical play *Enemy of the Stars*, and, in the first issue, twelve 'Vortices and Notes', including the article 'Futurism, Magic

⁶ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombadiering*, p. 47.

⁷ Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 3–4.

⁸ Andrzej Gasiorek, 'The "Little Magazine" as Weapon: *BLAST* (1914–1915)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Brooker and Thacker, I, 290–313 (p. 295).

and Life'. Lewis certainly made exaggerated claims to his primacy in the movement, which, by the time of the Tate Gallery retrospective exhibition *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism* in 1956 had culminated in his claim that 'Vorticism was, in fact, what I, personally, did and said at a certain period'.⁹ However, in a study that concerns itself chiefly, although not exclusively, with the literary aspects of the movement, Lewis's output remains the most considerable of any member of Vorticism. The Vorticist painter Helen Saunders (1885–1963) described Lewis as the movement's 'very able leader and publicist'; Pound, meanwhile, retrospectively admitted that Lewis was Vorticism's 'main mover'.¹⁰ Moreover, as shall be shown in the chapter, it is largely as a result of Lewis's personal relations with members of both English cultural groups and international formations that the Vorticist movement, and its aesthetic and principles, emerges.

While this chapter focuses principally on Lewis's writings, it should perhaps be noted at the outset that these texts are dedicated almost exclusively to visual art. Lewis was by 'profession' both an artist and a writer who followed a career in the two practices simultaneously. David Ayers has correctly argued that this fact is not a coincidence, but rather 'constitutive of the process by which his strategies of entry into the public sphere were achieved, since the writer acted as the agent of the painter, and the "artist" could properly be cast as other than the writer'. In his writings on art and the role of the artist in the modern era, Lewis 'could always present his activity as an author not as an *exemplification* of the art that he sought to defend but as its

⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Introduction', *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism: The Tate Gallery, 6 July–19 August 1956* (London: Tate Gallery, 1956), pp. 3–4 (p. 3).

¹⁰ Quoted in Brigid Peppin, *Helen Saunders, 1885–1963* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1996), pp. 12–13; Ezra Pound to Gladys Hynes, 13 November 1956, quoted in William C. Wees, 'Pound's Vorticism: Some New Evidence and Further Comments', *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1966), 211–16 (p. 211).

adjunct'.¹¹ Lewis's writing on art can and should be considered in relation to his paintings, as a 'verbal expression of a movement in visual art', but they should be analysed as more than mere appendages.¹²

I. Vorticism in the Field of Cultural Production

Vorticism's cultural production must be understood in the context of the historically developing space in which it was produced. In this sense, the question of the shape of the cultural field in England during the pre-war years, roughly between 1910 and 1914, is vital to uncover. For Bourdieu, a sociological approach that locates the production of art in the specific social conditions that gave rise to its production and the production of its value overcomes deterministic structuralist approaches, which only interpret the work of art as reflection of determinant social structures and see the work as devoid of subjective input. Moreover, in Bourdieu's methodology, cultural analysis must not subscribe to the false belief of the 'charismatic ideology of creation', which situates the creation of the artwork only in the individual 'genius' of the artist.¹³ Cultural producers are agents, who act in specific, historically determined situations, and in response to the shifting space — the 'possibilities' — of the field in which they operate; it is therefore emphatically not a question of the expression of autonomous identities. Recognising Lewis as an agent in the pre-war English cultural field allows one to remove attention from what critics have variously termed his 'genius', his 'personality', his jealousies, and his 'persecution mania' (the latter as Leonard Woolf termed it), which have often been viewed as crucial to a proper

¹¹ David Ayers, 'Lewis's Cultural Criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Tyrus Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) pp. 136–47 (p. 138). Original emphasis.

¹² Lewis, 'Introduction', *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism*, p. 3.

¹³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 76.

understanding of the formation of Vorticism.¹⁴ While an agent's pathology is certainly a valid concern in Bourdieu's methodology, it is more important to reconstitute the restricted field of cultural production. Of particular concern is Lewis's response to a rapidly evolving and shifting restricted field, wherein the *habitus*, or rules of the game, were becoming ever more complex and open to question. Lewis and Vorticism must thus be understood to express opinions because it is a bid for dominance in a highly competitive field. This can be seen in Lewis's dealings with Aestheticism, and the various cultural groupings operating in England, which had to be excoriated for their 'illegitimate' vision of the world in order for Lewis to attain cultural dominance.

England's pride of place as the world's foremost industrial nation was subject to extreme questioning in the pre-war period. Although Britain was the home of the Industrial Revolution, other national powers, particularly the United States and Germany, had introduced new standards of efficiency and expertise in the late nineteenth century, increasing levels of competition in the international sphere. Yet it was Germany in particular that was perceived to be the real threat. In the 1890s, and particularly since 1896, a recently united Germany had replaced France as the object of Britain's rivalry, as a result of the former country's rapidly increasing economic, manufacturing, and military prowess.¹⁵ What became known, somewhat hysterically, in popular culture as the 'German Menace' was not a fear of invasion, but rather apprehension concerning German industry, foreign policy and imperial aspirations, and the consequent danger it posed to the British Empire.¹⁶ Tensions were only

¹⁴ Leonard Woolf to Roy Thornton, 17 February 1966, quoted in Alan Munton, 'Lewis and Cultural Criticism', in *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Andrzej Gasiorek and Nathan Waddell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 64–81 (p. 80).

¹⁵ In 1896, in an incident that became known as the Kruger Telegram Crisis, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a message to the president of the Transvaal Republic, Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, which congratulated the president on having successfully resisted the British 'Jameson Raid'. The telegram was widely condemned in Britain and led to a notable increase in anti-German sentiment.

¹⁶ Patrick Longson, 'The Rise of the German Menace: Imperial Anxiety and British Popular Culture, 1896–1903' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), pp. 2–3.

exacerbated by the naval armaments race between Britain and Germany that began in 1906. Although historians have questioned the extent to which Britain was in real economic decline in the years before the First World War, with much to suggest that it was not, a *perception* of decline was nevertheless ubiquitous in British popular culture.¹⁷ Karin Orchard has written that in the pre-war period between 1910 and 1914 a ‘feeling of the decline of civilization, an apocalyptic mood, had set in, that came to be known as “the English sickness”’.¹⁸ The problem, by this time, was not only perceived to be an external threat to Britain, but also an internal problem, or national mentality: the British, embarrassed by their industrial superiority on the global stage, had adopted a concept of ‘Englishness’ during the nineteenth century that practically precluded industrialism, and stressed conservative, traditional values. As Martin J. Wiener has argued, the idealisation of material growth and technological innovation came to be viewed with suspicion during the Industrial Revolution, and became increasingly counteracted over the course of the nineteenth century by the contrary ideals of ‘stability, tranquillity, closeness to the past, and “nonmaterialism”’. England came to associate itself with the rural, the spiritual, the ancient, and the stable: in short, ‘everything industrial society was not’.¹⁹ By the early twentieth century, however, these anti-modern sentiments were beginning to be subject to scrutiny: the rapid modernising process that had been a characteristic of other European nations was not an experience felt by the British public. This notion that the British had somehow missed out on the modernising process, in contrast to other European

¹⁷ See, for example, D. C. M. Platt, ‘Introduction: Britain’s “Decline”’, in *Decline and Recovery in Britain’s Overseas Trade, 1873–1914*, ed. by D. C. M. Platt, A. J. H. Latham, and Randal Michie (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1993), pp. 1–12; Ross J. S. Hoffman, *Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry, 1875–1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), p. 292.

¹⁸ Karin Orchard, “‘A Laugh Like a Bomb’: The History and Ideas of the Vorticists”, in *BLAST: Vorticism 1914–1918*, ed. by Paul Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 14–23 (p. 14).

¹⁹ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 5–6.

nations, is articulated in a number of contemporary texts, and particularly in H. G. Wells's popular novel *Tono-Bungay* (1909), in which the protagonist's family mansion, 'Bladesover', is held to allegorise the disordered and archaic state of England:

Bladesover is, I am convinced, the clue to almost all that is distinctively British and perplexing to the foreign inquirer in England. [...] Grasp firmly that England was all Bladesover two hundred years ago; that it has had Reform acts indeed, and such-like changes of formula, but no essential revolution since then; that all that is modern and different has come in as a thing intruded or as a gloss upon this predominant formula, either impertinently or apologetically [...] Everybody who is not actually living in the shadow of a Bladesover is as it were perpetually seeking after lost orientations. We have never broken with our tradition, never even symbolically hewed it to pieces, as the French did in quivering fact in the Terror. But all the organising ideas have slackened, the old habitual bonds have relaxed or altogether come undone.²⁰

The Vorticists were acutely aware of the sense of national decline and the threat to British hegemony. Reflecting on the pre-war period many years later, Lewis remarked that 'England was in an unusually somnambulant condition'.²¹ In this regard, Lewis was referring not only to British industrial and economic decline, but also what he perceived to be its cultural decline. The need for England to modernise its cultural production in order to operate at the level of cultural fields in other European nations was one recognised by a number of English cultural figures of the period: as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Monro also felt that creating a new literary tradition for the future was a vital task for the 'poets of to-day'.²² However, Lewis and the Vorticists may be distinguished from other early British modernist groupings, particularly Monro and the Georgian poets, by the extent to which they saw English attitudes towards industrial progress as particularly symptomatic of this modern decline. Issues of territory and English national identity were never expressed so forcefully as in Vorticism, which declared in no uncertain terms within the pages of

²⁰ H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (London: Macmillan, 1909), pp. 17–18.

²¹ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Vorticists', *Vogue* (September 1956), p. 216 (p. 216).

²² Monro, 'Editorial', p. 248.

Blast that the ‘Modern World is due almost entirely to Anglo-Saxon genius, — its appearance and its spirit’, and that ‘Machinery, trains, steam-ships, all that distinguishes eternally our time, came far more from here than anywhere else’.²³ There is a concerted attempt throughout *Blast* to place England’s contributions to global industry at the forefront of the national imagination: ‘In dress, manners, mechanical inventions, LIFE, that is ENGLAND, has influenced Europe in the same way that France has in Art’. If English cultural efforts have been found wanting, it is suggested that it is only because ‘busy with this LIFE-EFFORT, she [England] has been the last to become conscious of the Art that is an organism of this new Order and Will of Man’.²⁴ The modern impulse is thus already a force in England, although it has been focused on life rather than art.

Nevertheless, this sense of cultural belatedness prompted Vorticism to position itself against what its proponents perceived to be an anti-industrial, effeminate, and decaying sensibility that operated outside the public sphere of industry, commerce, and technology. It made itself felt in a generalising, vehement reaction against the nineteenth century, and particularly against Aestheticism, which had emphasised the autonomy of art from the praxis of life. Although Aestheticism was largely, though not exclusively, urban in its proclivities, and valued artificiality over the natural, it was antithetical to Vorticism’s modern aesthetic ideal in myriad ways. Its emphasis on beauty and sexual dissidence, which was perceived to manifest particularly prominently, as a result of Oscar Wilde’s trial in 1895, in male ‘effeminate’ behaviour and a rejection of heterosexual norms, ran contrary to Vorticism’s aggressively hyper-masculine and virile aesthetic. Aestheticism also affected to reject mass cultural production unlike Vorticism, which flagrantly used to its advantage the mass media

²³ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Manifesto II’, *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 30–43 (p. 39).

²⁴ Ibid.

form of the newspaper, thus obscuring the division between art and life: William Morris's Kelmscott Press, for example, which was dedicated to the making of books using traditional hand-printing techniques, had eschewed mass production methods that exploited workers. Also significant was the fascination with and aestheticisation of the morbid that permeated Aestheticism: the *Yellow Book*'s colour was chosen not only to reference prohibited French novels of the period, but also because it was redolent of bruising and the process of decay. In an article published in the *New Weekly* shortly before the publication of *Blast*, Lewis emphasised the need to rid England of 'aestheticism, crass snobbery and languors of distinguished phlegm'; his use of a metaphor of bodily excretion underlined the common association of Decadence with 'disease' and labelled Aestheticism as an abject phenomenon of which English culture should divest itself.²⁵ *Blast* consequently declared to 'CURSE | WITH EXPLETIVE OF WHIRLWIND | THE BRITANNIC ÆSTHETE' and reviled 'SNOBBERY (disease of femininity) | FEAR OF RIDICULE (arch vice of inactive, sleepy) | PLAY STYLISM SINS AND PLAGUES of this LYMPHATIC finished (we admit in every sense finished) VEGETABLE HUMANITY'.²⁶

To a certain extent, it is also possible that Vorticism's rejection of Aestheticism was in part due to what Lewis perceived to be the latter group's explicit reliance on the influence of French writers. This reliance was anathema to the Vorticists, who aimed to re-assert English cultural dominance in their writing and art, against 'SENTIMENTAL GALLIC GUSH' and 'PARISIAN PAROCHIALISM'.²⁷ Efforts to bring England up to date with modern art developments in France had previously been attempted by Walter Sickert and other like-minded artists, who had

²⁵ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Man of the Week: Marinetti', *The New Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 11 (30 May 1914), pp. 328–29 (p. 329).

²⁶ Lewis, 'Manifesto I', p. 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

set up the New English Art Club in 1885 as an alternative to the conservative Royal Academy. Credited with bringing the Impressionist style to England, Sickert nevertheless recognised that by 1914 England was desperately in need of a new cultural force, and as such he made encouraging remarks about Vorticism in the English press.²⁸ The close connections between the New English Art Club and the *Yellow Book* were not to escape Lewis's attention, however, and Lewis lambasted Sickert, who was part of the Camden Town Group with Lewis, as a 'Bohemian plague-spot on clean English life — part, indeed, of that larger Yellow Plague-spot edited by Arthur Symons', and asserted that he much preferred 'the naked and clean thing to the boudoir suggestiveness and Yellow Book Gallicisms'.²⁹

Lewis's antipathy towards this nineteenth-century aesthetic may also be viewed as a strategy of denunciation that could be levelled against other cultural groups in a highly competitive cultural field. This can be seen particularly in Lewis's dealings with Roger Fry and members of the Bloomsbury group. Fry had set up the Omega Workshops in July 1913: a decorative, applied arts company that would allow painters and sculptors to earn a better living from their art and disseminate post-impressionist ideas.³⁰ Fry offered a fee of thirty shillings per week to artists, which paid for a day and a half of work at the Omega Workshops each week, with the rest of the time devoted to their own art.³¹ Lewis was a member of the group from July to October 1913, but had left after a well publicised quarrel, ostensibly because Fry had taken a commission — the decoration of the Post-Impressionist room at the *Daily*

²⁸ See, for example, Walter Sickert, 'The New English Art Club', *The New Age*, vol. 15, no. 5 (4 June 1914), pp. 114–15.

²⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Modern Art', *The New Age*, vol. 14, no. 22 (2 April 1914), p. 703 (p. 703). The *Yellow Book* was actually edited by Henry Harland (1861–1905).

³⁰ For more on the operations of the Omega Workshops see Alexandra Gerstein, ed., *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913–1919*, (London: Fontanka, 2009), p. 81–82. On Fry's rationale behind the Omega Workshops, see particularly Roger Fry, 'The Artist in the Great State', in *The Great State: Essays in Construction*, ed. by H. G. Wells (London: Harper & Brothers, 1912), pp. 251–72.

³¹ Judith Collins, *The Omega Workshops* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), p. 32.

Mail Ideal Home Exhibition of 1913 — that was actually intended for him and the artist Spencer Gore. The ‘Round Robin’ in which this accusation appeared, which Lewis had signed with the artist-members Frederick Etchells, Cuthbert Hamilton, and Edward Wadsworth, had been disseminated to the shareholders of the Omega Workshops. It did not only assert this claim, however, but also expressed the opinion that the Omega Workshops was wholly opposed to the modern ‘vigorous art-instinct’, with its ‘[p]rettiness, with its mid-Victorian languish of the neck, and its skin of “greenery-yallery”’.³² Lewis explicitly accused Fry of the belatedness he associated with English culture, denouncing him publicly for adhering to a distinctly nineteenth-century aesthetic, and positioning himself firmly against this tendency. In the same piece he labelled the Omega Workshops, and the Bloomsbury circle that were its main proponents, a

family party of strayed and dissenting Aesthetes [...] [who] were compelled to call in as much modern talent as they could find, to do the rough and masculine work without which they knew their efforts would not rise above the level of a pleasant tea party.³³

Richard Cork has argued that the ‘Round Robin’ letters should not be understood as ‘political squabbles so much as an irreconcilably opposed view of art’;³⁴ however, the aesthetic conflict regarding the legitimate vision of the world is precisely a political conflict because it is a struggle over the power to impose the dominant vision of social reality.³⁵ The Omega Workshops was created in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement of Morris: ‘pure design’, avoiding mechanical reproduction, and recognising the creative status of the designer (who, meanwhile, remained strictly

³² Wyndham Lewis, ‘The “Round Robin”’, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Rose, pp. 47–50 (p. 49).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, I, 93.

³⁵ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 101–102.

anonymous) were at the centre of its aims.³⁶ In this regard it was wholly opposed to Lewis's aesthetic, which was already veering towards abstraction. Moreover, the queer culture associated with Bloomsbury circles was at odds with Lewis's heterosexuality and chauvinism, and his 'virile' conception of modernism. Certainly, the masculine and modern is opposed to the feminine and Victorian in Lewis's framework, in which Aestheticism becomes a shorthand for effeminacy, impotency, disease, and Decadence. For art historian Lisa Tickner, who also considers Lewis's work in the context of the cultural field, Lewis's undertaking of the 'rough and masculine work' constitutes 'a promise of radical aesthetic endeavour couched in terms of heterosexual masculine supremacy because it's also a bid for dominance in a highly competitive (increasingly proletarianised and feminised) field'.³⁷ Lewis's militant polemic against the Omega Workshops asserts his ability to attest to a specifically modern condition that is urbanised and industrial, and in so doing he attacks the status accorded to art in modern bourgeois society.

II. Lewis and Aestheticism

Lewis's and Vorticism's challenge of the legitimacy of the cultural aims of almost every movement — and even much looser cultural formations such as the Bloomsbury Group — in the existing cultural field of pre-war London must be understood as what Bourdieu has termed a 'heretical break' with cultural orthodoxy to assert cultural dominance.³⁸ This heretical challenge is part of the *habitus*, or 'feel for

³⁶ Roger Fry, Brochure (n. d.) for *Omega Workshops Ltd., Artists Decorators*, quoted in Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, I, 90.

³⁷ Lisa Tickner, 'English Modernism in the Cultural Field', in *English Art 1860–1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. by David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 13–30 (p. 24).

³⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 40.

the game', since agents compete for the distribution of available positions in any given field.³⁹ However, to be heretical in this specific period was not a guarantee of cultural success or dominance, but rather a means of achieving cultural recognition. Bourdieu's theorisation of the restricted cultural field is largely conceived in relation to the specific circumstances of late nineteenth-century Paris: he concentrates principally on the literary milieu of Emile Zola and the Symbolists to inform his socio-cultural thesis. While his theories are applicable to this time period, by 1914, the situation had changed slightly, if almost imperceptibly. In the avant-garde climate that Lewis and other cultural producers entered, to be heretical was increasingly the only means of acquiring cultural legitimacy, since the strategies of the time were to shout as loudly as possible.

The recent formulation of what would become archetypal avant-garde strategies by the Italian Futurists in 1909 made the rhetoric of opposition, particularly against allegedly 'passéist' doctrines, a virtually compulsory component of a 'modern' literary style. Before the Vorticist manifestos were written, Europe had seen an influx of acerbic, oppositional statements of position-taking by a number of different literary groups: Pound's highly prescriptive 'A few don'ts by an Imagist' (1913), which has been retrospectively identified as a manifesto;⁴⁰ Blaise Cendrars's *Inédits secrets* (1913); and 'A Slap in the Face of Public Taste' (1913) by the Russian Cubo-Futurists are only a few such polemics. The manifesto form was privileged because it inherently challenged dominant ideologies, denoting, as Janet Lyon has written, a 'passion for truth-telling' that 'aims to challenge false conciliation in the

³⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

⁴⁰ Andrew Thacker has argued that 'Imagisme' and 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' can be considered 'the nearest document to a manifesto of Imagism'. Andrew Thacker, *The Imagist Poets* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2010), p. 37. See also Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group, 1910–1914* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), pp. 118–19; Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 129.

name of a truth that fills the hearts and minds of its putative constituents', and seeks to convince its audience that 'those constituents can and will be mobilized into the living incarnation of the unruly, furious expression implied in the text'.⁴¹ It is important to note, however, that despite an avant-garde rhetoric that narrated their group position as that of the disadvantaged, excluded, or even marginalised Other, this was not entirely the case. As Tickner has observed, the 'embattled' status affected by the avant-garde tends to obscure the fact that it was 'briefly and, on certain terms [...] fashionable'.⁴² William Wees has commented extensively on the popular mania for the new avant-garde movements in pre-war London, especially between 1913 and 1914: so-called 'Futurist' styles could be found everywhere, from high fashion to art galleries, and from music halls to interior decoration. The 'faddishness' of the avant-garde had reached new heights in England, leading to a trend whereby, as Clive Bell noted, to 'be open minded became modish'.⁴³ Lewis confirms this when he describes his own rising popularity in high society as an avant-garde writer in his memoir of the period, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937).⁴⁴ As such, to be an avant-garde writer or artist in this cultural milieu may be considered, to a great extent, a performative act, especially since the 'metaphorical implications' of the 'avant-garde' are, as Wees has argued, to be found in any group's understanding of the language and militaristic aesthetic practice of 'battles, advances and retreats, victories and defeats'.⁴⁵ Locating

⁴¹ Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, p. 14.

⁴² Tickner, 'English Modernism in the Cultural Field', p. 29.

⁴³ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, pp. 40–1, and p. 107–108.

⁴⁴ See Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 32 and pp. 46–49.

⁴⁵ Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 40. In fact, Augustus John was later to remark that Lewis 'conceived the world as an arena, where various insurrectionary forces struggled to outwit each other in the game of artistic power politics'. Augustus John, *Chiaroscuro: Fragments of an Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), p. 50.

oneself aggressively in opposition to another vision of reality had become an indication of truly ‘modern’ artistic value.⁴⁶

This strategy of conflict in the restricted field meant that the avant-gardes were inflexible in their campaigning, particularly against groups that diverged from their modern ideals. Vorticism cannot be seen as a collective in quite the same way that Italian Futurism was: it aimed to showcase ‘an art of Individuals’, and indeed, many of the texts featured in the first issue of *Blast* are jarring in their distinct lack of a ‘Vorticist’ aesthetic: neither Ford Madox Ford’s first instalment of ‘The Saddest Story’ (the initial title of *The Good Soldier*) nor Rebecca West’s ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ truly enact the aims set out in the *Blast* manifestos, the former being an example of Ford’s literary impressionism, and the latter a feminist commentary on marriage.⁴⁷ Even Pound’s ‘Vorticist’ poems can be seen as an aggressive rebranding of Imagism after Amy Lowell’s usurpation of the group, although some critics have by contrast identified Vorticism as a finessing of Imagist principles.⁴⁸ But despite Vorticism’s incoherence as a movement, it nevertheless adopted a group mentality in its manifestos, and thus emerged as a united front that announced war with the past. *Blast*’s polemical stance is thus a bid for symbolic recognition in an avant-garde field in which to be aggressive was becoming increasingly compulsory.

Vorticism’s antagonistic repudiation of the Aesthetic movement of the 1890s might be viewed, therefore, as a prerequisite to truly belong to the cultural scene of pre-war London, and as such its assertions of independence, professions of rupture

⁴⁶ Lewis would carry this performative stance over into his post-Vorticist writing: see his construction of his persona ‘The Enemy’, which considers what it means to belong to the public sphere as an outsider. Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926).

⁴⁷ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Long Live the Vortex!’, *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 7–8 (p. 8). For West’s ‘uneasy’ fit with *Blast*, see Kathryn Laing, “‘Am I a Vorticist?’: Re-Reading Rebecca West’s “Indissoluble Matrimony” and *BLAST*”, in *Blast at 100: A Modernist Magazine Reconsidered*, ed. by Philip Coleman, Kathryn Milligan, and Nathan O’Donnell (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 44–61.

⁴⁸ Peter Jones, for example, asserts that Vorticism was a ‘stricter form of Imagism’. Peter Jones, ‘Introduction’, *Imagist Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 21.

with the past, and dismissal of *fin-de-siècle* culture must be re-examined more closely. Contrary to the statements of *Blast*, there are a number of connections between Lewis and the late nineteenth-century British writers that Vorticism professed to abjure. As noted above, *Blast* was published by John Lane of the Bodley Head, who had also notably published the Decadent literary journal the *Yellow Book* two decades before. This fact has been commented on by a number of literary critics, including Faith Binckes and Andrew Thacker.⁴⁹ The back pages of the first issue of *Blast* featured an advertisement for the complete set of the thirteen volumes of the *Yellow Book* for £3 and 5s. net, as well as advertisements for various other novels and arts publications, including Wilde's *The Sphinx* (1894), Vernon Lee's *The Tower of the Mirrors* and *Louis Norbert*, *Alastair* with a note by Robert Ross, and two books on James McNeill Whistler. The second issue of *Blast* featured, in its back pages, excerpts from reviews of the first issue, which included the *Sunday Times* assessment that 'what the yellow book [*sic*] did for the artistic movement of its decade 'BLAST' aims at doing for the arts and literature of to-day'.⁵⁰ Correspondence between Lane and Lewis reveals that *Blast* was initially conceived as a quarterly review, priced at 2s. 6d. per issue; Lane was, however, not responsible for the journal's printing costs, the services for which were actually provided by Leveridge and Co. and organised by Douglas Goldring.⁵¹ The same letter from Lane to Lewis indicates that the print run of the magazine was to be one thousand copies in Britain; Lane also suggested that he might distribute *Blast* in the United States through the John Lane Company and in Canada through his

⁴⁹ See Faith Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 7; Thacker, 'London: Rhymers, Imagists, and Vorticists', p. 688.

⁵⁰ 'Blast: A review of The Great English Vortex', *Blast*, no. 2, n. p.

⁵¹ John Lane to Wyndham Lewis, 27 May 1914. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Rare and Manuscript Collections, Wyndham Lewis Collection, 1877–1975, Collection number 4612, Box 113, Fol. 101. See also Michael E. Leveridge, 'The Printing of *BLAST*', *Wyndham Lewis Annual*, no. 7 (2000), 20–31; Douglas Goldring, *South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review Circle* (London: Constable, 1943), p. 67.

agents, the Toronto-based Bell and Cockburn. Wees has suggested that five hundred copies were distributed in the United States.⁵² If Vorticism's Aestheticist connections have been commented on, it has largely been through this connection between Lane and Lewis: in fact, it has prompted Thacker to argue that *Blast*'s 'puce cover contained more than a tint of 1890s yellow', which indicates that 'the division between modernist and Decadent was not as clear-cut as might appear'.⁵³ Certainly Lane's publication of *Blast* is a telling indicator of Vorticism's links to the *fin-de-siècle* cultural production of London, but it is far from being the only sign of it. Vorticism was in continual engagement with Decadent Aestheticism, despite its ostensible opposition to the British *fin-de-siècle* cultural legacy.

Lewis was also in correspondence with Robert Ross during the formation of Vorticism.⁵⁴ Ross was a journalist, art critic, and art dealer known for his personal and professional relationship with Oscar Wilde, for whom he was literary executor after Wilde's death (he reprinted and republished Wilde's works, including *Salome* (1891)), as well as for his connections with other writers of the 1890s. Lewis had, perhaps surprisingly, invited Ross to the launch party of the first issue of *Blast*, on 15 July 1914 (the issue had, after much delay, been published two weeks prior to this

⁵² Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 160.

⁵³ Thacker, 'London: Rhymers, Imagists, and Vorticists', p. 688.

⁵⁴ It is not clear exactly how Lewis and Ross first met. However, Robert Ross managed the Carfax Gallery in London from 1901 to 1908. This was the gallery where the Camden Town Group (which included Lewis) held their three exhibitions in June 1911, December 1911, and December 1912. Although Ross did not run the gallery at the time of the Camden Town Group's exhibitions, it seems quite feasible that he would have attended their shows, and he was certainly involved with some of the more avant-garde currents in London in the pre-war era. See Samuel Shaw, 'The Carfax Gallery and the Camden Town Group', in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, ed. by Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, and Jennifer Munday (May 2012) <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/samuel-shaw-the-carfax-gallery-and-the-camden-town-group-r1104371>> [accessed 24 March 2019]. Lewis states in his introduction to the *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism* exhibition catalogue that 'I first exhibited [...] in the Carfax Gallery, a small gallery belonging to Robert Ross, situated in St. James'. Lewis, 'Introduction', *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism*, p. 3.

date, on 2 July 1914, although the date of publication is marked as 20 June 1914).⁵⁵ Ross was forced to decline the invitation due to ill health, being ‘knocked over’, as he put it, ‘by a less pleasant Blast’, and wrote: ‘Even if physically capable of coming to your banquet, I should seem a Victorian Death’s head at your revels’. However, in a post-script to the same letter, Ross stated, simply and with nothing else to qualify it, that: ‘The first number [of *Blast*] is a tonic for the century’.⁵⁶ In the early twentieth century the word ‘tonic’ described a general remedial treatment for a range of relatively minor medical ailments including nervousness, gastrointestinal disorders, and coughs and colds, and signified a restorative, strengthening, or invigorating treatment.⁵⁷ Ross’s observation is perhaps unexpected in view of the fact that he had heavily criticised Fry’s ‘Manet and the Post-Impressionists’ exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1910, labelling it a ‘widespread plot to destroy the whole fabric of European painting’ in the *Morning Post*.⁵⁸ Indeed, given the intentionally shocking nature of *Blast*, it would be reasonable to suppose that Ross would have a similar assessment of Vorticism. Moreover, repeated mentions of Wilde in *Blast* constitute him, as Miranda Hickman has written, as an unflattering synecdoche for British Aestheticism.⁵⁹ However, the notion that Lewis’s new avant-garde movement could be considered a stimulant, or restorative, or even a corrective antidote to the ills of the

⁵⁵ This connection is perhaps particularly surprising because Lewis seems to position Ross unambiguously as a critic in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, alleging that Ross referred to him as a ‘buffalo in wolf’s clothing’. Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Robert Ross to Wyndham Lewis, 14 July 1914. Ithaca, NY Cornell University Rare and Manuscript Collections, Wyndham Lewis Collection, 1877–1975, Collection Number 4612, Box 135, Fol. 86.

⁵⁷ See, for example, an advertisement by Allen and Hansbury of Lombard Street, London, which was printed on blotting paper between 1904 and 1909 for “‘Byno” hypophosphates”, branded as an ‘ideal tonic in nervous prostration and overstrain’. Blotters, Allen and Hansbury, 1904–1909. ‘Byno’ Hypophosphates (London: Allen and Hansbury’s Ltd, [1909?]), Wellcome Collection. <<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/cyztwg3f>> [accessed 4 March 2019]; and the Hull-based company W. T. Owbridge’s advertisements for ‘Owbridge’s Lung Tonic’: ‘Owbridge’s Lung Tonic’, *Leicester Daily Post*, 25 November 1914, p. 4. See also advertisements for remedies for indigestion and nervousness by Guy’s Tonic Company: Advertisement for Guy’s Tonic, to aid indigestion and nervousness, showing a nurse pouring the tonic into a measuring cup, Wellcome Collection. <<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/f382smvs>> [accessed 4 March 2019].

⁵⁸ See Ross, ‘The Post-Impressionists at the Grafton: The Twilight of the Idols’, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism*, pp. 50–53.

age by a writer so heavily invested — both financially and personally — in continuing the legacy of 1890s Decadent literature raises the question of why Vorticism was seen to be a palatable, and even viable way forward for English literature and art for such writers. While Ross's post-script to Lewis might be viewed as only a gesture of goodwill towards a promising young writer and artist, evidence seems to suggest otherwise, and it is perhaps significant in this regard that in 1912 Ross commissioned the soon-to-be Vorticist sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880–1959) to design and create the sculpture for Wilde's tomb at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.⁶⁰ As Hickman has noted, the controversial monument was unveiled in 1914, the same year as the publication of the first issue of *Blast*.⁶¹ Ross's enthusiasm for Vorticism is a startling point of intersection between Decadence and Vorticism that renders Lane's connection to *Blast* less of an anomaly and more of a trend.

Lane and Ross were not the only British Aestheticists to encourage and support Lewis and Vorticism, however. It is particularly significant that Herbert Horne also took an interest in the fledgling movement. Horne was an English poet, architect, typographer, art historian, and antiquarian who was born in London but had moved to Florence, Italy, permanently in 1905. In London he had been an associate of the Rhymer's Club, the group of poets founded by W. B. Yeats, Ernest Rhys, and T. W. Rolleston in 1890, which was committed to Aesthetic and Decadent verse.⁶² He also edited the journal the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* as well as its later incarnation the *Hobby Horse*, a quarterly periodical that comprised twenty-eight issues and was

⁶⁰ Jacob Epstein published two drawings in the first issue of *Blast*, numbered XV and XVI. He is mentioned in the manifesto 'Vortex' by Henri Gaudier Brzeska. See: Henri Gaudier Brzeska, 'Vortex', *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 155–58 (p. 158). Epstein did not contribute to the second issue of *Blast*.

⁶¹ Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism*, p. 65.

⁶² The group also included Arthur Symonds, Lionel Johnson, and Ernest Dowson, among others. The group published two books of poetry, *The Book of the Rhymer's Club* (1892), published by Elkin Matthews, and *The Second Book of the Rhymer's Club* (1894), published by Elkin Matthews and John Lane.

heavily influenced by William Morris, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Walter Pater, as well as the Arts and Crafts movement, the Pre-Raphaelites, the Decadent movement, and the Aesthetic movement.⁶³ Later in life he translated and wrote an introduction and commentary for the second edition of Giorgio Vasari's *The Life of Leonardo Da Vinci* (1903), and he published his own monograph on the early Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli in 1908.⁶⁴ In Florence, he was associated with Bernard Berenson and the circle of Anglo-American art historians who specialised in the Renaissance. Horne's interest in Italian Renaissance art and culture and his association with Decadent poets marks him unambiguously as a late-Victorian cultural figure: in fact, he had no direct input into modernist works of the twentieth century. And yet it appears that he cultivated some interest in Lewis and the Vorticist movement, as well as the Italian Futurists. On 14 April 1914 Horne sent the art historian Randall Davies a letter, enclosing inside the envelope a copy of the periodical *Lacerba*, which he described as:

our Florentine 'Futurist' Magazine. Please read carefully the first article 'contro le Donne' and give special attention to the first design by Rosai. Tho' I fear you are not sufficiently Florentine to grasp the full import of the fragments of words and other things which feature in that remarkable drawing [...] I wish you would pass it on to Wyndham Lewis, and tell him that I should be so very grateful to know how he and his school would treat such a subject. I imagine his friezes for the dining rooms of the great, culminate with a specially attractive treatment of the same theme.⁶⁵

Based both on Horne's description of the contents of the issue and on the date he wrote the letter, the number of that he sent indirectly to Lewis must be the issue that was published on 1 April 1914. The 'first article' that Horne refers to is actually Giovanni Papini's 'Il Massacro delle donne' [the Massacre of Women], and the

⁶³ The periodical was called *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* between 1884 and 1892, but shortened its title to *The Hobby Horse* in its final years, from 1893 to 1894.

⁶⁴ See Giorgio Vasari and Herbert Horne, *The Life of Leonardo Da Vinci* (London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1903), and Herbert Horne, *Sandro Botticelli* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1908).

⁶⁵ Letter in Mrs. T. C. Dugdale's collection, quoted in Ian Fletcher, *Rediscovering Herbert Horne* (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1990), p. 147.

drawing by Ottone Rosai is ‘Latrina’ [Latrine]. The issue also contained Marinetti’s manifesto ‘Onomatopée astratte e sensibilità numerica’ [Abstract Onomatopoeias and Numerical Sensibility];⁶⁶ Ambrose Vollard’s ‘Portrait de Cézanne’; Paolo Bètuda’s words-in-freedom concrete poem ‘Looping the Loop’; Cézanne, ‘Disegno’; Italo Tavolato’s ‘Preghiera futurista’ [Futurist Prayer]; Marinetti’s ‘Gli sfruttatori del futurismo’ [the exploiters of Futurism]; Moscardelli’s ‘Naufragio’ [Shipwreck]; and Bino Binazzi’s ‘Gita redentice – Caffè’ [Return trip — Café].⁶⁷

The connections between Vorticism and *Lacerba*, the Florentine Futurist periodical, have long been recognised in cultural criticism: it is generally acknowledged that *Blast* owes much of its experimental typography and page design to the journal edited by Papini, Soffici, and Prezolini, and its list of ‘blasts’ and ‘blesses’ to Guillaume Apollinaire’s ‘merda ai’ [shit to] and ‘rose a’ [rose to] of ‘L’Antitradizione futurista’, published in *Lacerba* in September 1913.⁶⁸ *Poetry and Drama* had listed *Lacerba* as one of the ‘Periodicals Received’ (presumably by Monro’s Poetry Bookshop) since June 1913, and it seems reasonable to suppose that Lewis may have encountered the journal there.⁶⁹ However, the notion that Horne also sent Lewis a copy of the periodical raises a separate issue: that Horne considered Rosai’s Futurist drawing to be ‘remarkable’ and a suggestive point of departure for thinking about how the English Vorticist movement might evolve implies that the British Aesthetes had more in common with the Vorticists (and, arguably, the Futurists) than might at first be supposed. Horne was also aware, as indicated by his

⁶⁶ This was the second part of the manifesto more commonly known in English as ‘Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor and the Numerical Sensibility’. The first part was published in *Lacerba* on 15 March 1914 under the title ‘Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico nelle parole in libertà’.

⁶⁷ See *Lacerba*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1 April 1914), pp. 97–112.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 77; Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England’, p. 112; Perloff, *The Futurist Moment*, p. 181; Binckes, ‘Journalism and Periodical Culture’, p. 531. Guillaume Apollinaire, ‘L’Antitradizione futurista’, *Lacerba*, vol. 1, no. 18 (15 September 1913), pp. 202–03.

⁶⁹ ‘A List of Recent Books’, *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 2 (June 1913), pp. 255–60 (p. 260).

reference to Lewis's 'friezes for the dining rooms of the great', that Lewis had designed a dining room for the Countess of Drogheda in the winter and spring of 1914. A photograph of the product of this commission appears in the first issue of *Blast*, as illustration VII, and is titled 'Decoration for the Countess of Drogheda's House' (in the illustrations list at the front of the issue the title is rendered incorrectly as 'Decoration for the Countess of Drogheda's House').⁷⁰ The decorated room, at 40 Wilton Crescent, in Belgravia, London, was well publicised in the British press:⁷¹ *The Times* described the ceiling as 'jet black, as is the floor, and the walls are panelled in black velvet'.⁷² The photograph itself shows an elaborate, multi-panelled mirror, described by *The Times* as an 'ebony chimney mirror in geometrical pattern', above the mantelpiece, and a frieze surrounding it, painted 'in the Cubist style, vivid light reds, dark greens, and other tints'.⁷³ The darkened room, which Cork has likened to a 'secret midnight cavern', and a place for 'black magic', with its primitive, totemic forms on the silver friezes.⁷⁴ Certainly one can find more than a hint of Decadent Aestheticism in this description. It indicates not only that the division between modernist and Decadent and Aestheticist movements was not as sharply defined as might at first appear, but, further, that the last Aestheticists had a vested interest in encouraging, guiding, and promoting the work of the new Vorticist movement. Interior decoration was also an art form that Horne dedicated his life to: his house in Florence, now the Horne Museum, is a lavish collection of art and furniture of Renaissance Florence.

⁷⁰ See 'Illustrations', *Blast*, no. 1, p. 6.

⁷¹ See Frank Rutter, 'Art and Artists — the English Cubists', *The New Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 3 (4 April 1914), p. 85.

⁷² 'A Cubist Room: Decorative Scheme at Lady Drogheda's House', *The Times*, 28 February 1914, p. 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Richard Cork, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Drogheda Dining-Room', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 126, no. 979 (October 1984), 610–19 (p. 612 and p. 615). <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/881838>> [accessed 18 June 2018].

In a number of ways, the English Aesthetes might have seen a similar cultural project to their own in Vorticism. Like Aestheticism, Vorticism was anti-realist, it aimed to shock and unsettle, and it was also, to a certain extent, decorative. To be considered in this respect are Lewis's contributions for Frida Strindberg's Cabaret Theatre Club, also known as the Cave of the Golden Calf, which comprised the programme and preliminary prospectus, as well as Lewis's painting *Kermesse* (1912), which adorned the club's wall. The Rebel Art Centre also produced decorative applied art, such as 'painting of screens, fans, lampshades, scarves'.⁷⁵ In fact, Lewis's connections to the writers of the 1890s was not to be first noted in recent criticism, but was commented on — both obliquely and more explicitly — before and during Lewis's editorship of *Blast*. A caricature of Lewis, drawn by E. X. Kapp and published in the *New Weekly* in May 1914, portrays Lewis as an archetypal Decadent sitting, heavily wrapped in scarf and cloak, at a café table with a (presumably alcoholic) drink in front of him, a cigarette balanced in his mouth, and his eyes closed in despondence (see Figure 1). These observations continued even after both Vorticism and *Blast*'s publication had been announced: the *Birmingham Daily Mail* noted that *Blast* was of 'somewhat the same spirit and from the same press "The Yellow Book" was issued twenty years ago'.⁷⁶ The 'same spirit' noted by the newspaper might well have been referring to both journal's propensity for pre-publication advertising; a certain respect for the image as separate from the text; their

⁷⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Prospectus. The Rebel Art Centre* (1914), n. p., quoted in Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 70.

⁷⁶ 'Notes and News', *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 1 July 1914, p. 4.



Figure 1: E. X. Kapp, 'Impression of Wyndham Lewis', *The New Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 11 (30 May 1914), p. 331.

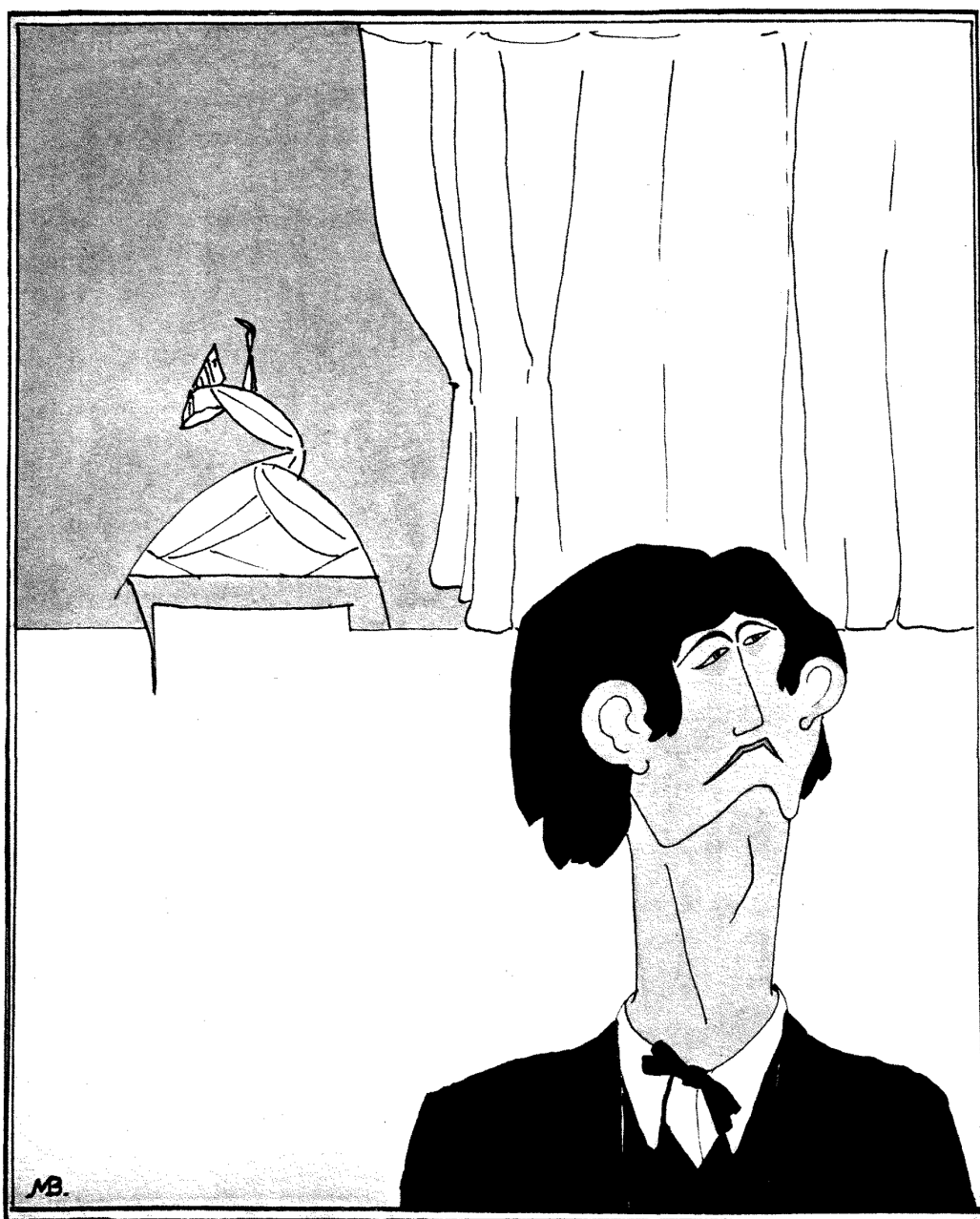
statuses as inter-arts publications; their intention to scandalise and satirise; and their pioneering typography and *mise-en-page* (to be seen particularly in both journal's highly effective use of white space as an element in its own right). However, it probably referred principally to *Blast*'s excessive, brightly coloured cover: the 'great MAGENTA cover'd opusculus', as Pound called it, aimed, like the similarly garish *Yellow Book*, to 'draw attention to its own materiality', presenting itself as an

aesthetic object to be admired (both journals were also, however, intended as objects to be desired, and thus driven by both aesthetic and commercial impulses).⁷⁷

If, however, Lewis and Vorticism's Aestheticist heritage was observed in contemporary media, a debt to Futurism was equally noted, and occasionally a joint influence was astutely recognised in the periodical press. The short-lived periodical the *Blue Review* (1913) published a cartoon by X. Marcel Boulestin (1878–1943) in its July 1913 issue, titled 'Post Georgian' (see Figure 2), a term first coined by Edward Marsh (sponsor of the Georgian poets and editor of the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies published by Monro) to describe the Imagist movement. The image depicts, as Binckes has noted, a Lewisian figure in the apparel of an 1890s bohemian, standing in front of a 'Vorticist-like design or piece of sculpture', thereby 'linking this emerging faction to the performances of Futurism, but also to old-fashioned ideas of the image of the artist that [George Bernard] Shaw had used to send up the "dekkadent [*sic*] [Gilbert] Cannan in *Fanny's First Play*"'.⁷⁸ While Binckes is correct in her analysis of the 'Futurist' performativity of Lewis, and of his Aestheticist connections, she does not go far enough in her identification of Futurism in the image. Although the foreground figure is indeed Lewisian ('Post Georgian', although referring principally to Imagism, could equally apply to Lewis in 1913 because the divisions between the various avant-garde groupings were not always distinct), the statue in the background bears a resemblance to Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, which had first been exhibited at Boccioni's solo exhibition at the Galerie La Boétie in Paris in June 1913: one month before the issue of the *Blue*

⁷⁷ Ezra Pound to Wyndham Lewis, 3 December 1924, *Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Timothy Materer (New York: New Directions, 1985), pp. 138–40 (p. 138); Dennis Denisoff, 'Decadence and Aestheticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 31–52 (p. 42).

⁷⁸ Binckes, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde*, p. 168.



“ Post Georgian ”

By X. Marcel Boulestin

Figure 2: X. Marcel Boulestin, ‘Post Georgian’, *The Blue Review*, vol. 1, no 3 (July 1913), n. p. [‘Frontispiece’].

Review was published.⁷⁹ The ‘Aestheticist’ Lewis may thus be seen to be contemplating a pre-eminently Futurist sculpture, which points the way forward for a new manifestation of modern English art. It does not, however, diminish Lewis’s

⁷⁹ See Umberto Boccioni, *1^{re} exposition de sculpture futuriste du peintre et sculpteur Futuriste Boccioni: du 20 juin au 16 juillet* (Paris: Galerie la Boétie, 1913).

Aestheticist leanings, which is understood to be the very foundation on which Lewis builds to develop his Vorticist practice.

It is to be understood, then, that avant-garde cultural institutions were already, to a certain degree, extant in England during the period in which Lewis was formulating *Blast*. The methods for disseminating what might be termed broadly avant-garde aims — a need to challenge bourgeois aesthetic values and promote unorthodox or experimental literature and art — had been put into practice through little magazines since the 1890s. *Blast* certainly would not have been recognised as art or literature without the prior existence of the *Yellow Book* since, as Bourdieu argues, art objects must be socially instituted as works of art by spectators (or readers) capable of acknowledging them as such. In this sense, symbolic production is equally important as the material production of the work of art, because it determines the belief in the value of the work.⁸⁰

However, as a result of these similar aims and methods, Vorticism had to differentiate itself substantially from Aestheticism on a thematic level, in order to establish itself as a new force in the cultural field. It thus adopted a Futurist praxis of performative repudiation of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, which manifests as an attack on the autonomous principle of art in Aestheticism (which is held to render art and literature as socially and politically ineffective, and thus intrinsically feminised), and a simultaneous assertion of the new, heretical movement as original, modern and, fundamentally, engaged with real life (and thus inherently masculine). It is likely that Lewis had been aware of Futurism almost since the movement's inception, because his short story 'A Breton Innkeeper' had been published in Goldring's literary and travel magazine *The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine* in August 1910: the same issue

⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 37.

that published, in truncated form, ‘Futurist Venice’ and the first Futurist manifesto.⁸¹ Although points five, six, seven, and nine of the latter manifesto were omitted by Goldring (the ninth point being the most controversial of the tenets, which declared the Futurists’ intention to glorify war and anarchism and established their contempt for woman), the eleventh point was retained. This declared the Futurists’ intentions to celebrate the ‘multicoloured and polyphonic surf of revolutions in the modern capitals’ and to sing the ‘nocturnal vibration of arsenals and docks beneath their glaring electric moons’.⁸² The reference to ‘glaring electric moons’ is particularly significant because it suggests that Futurism does not repudiate Decadence altogether, but rather transforms some of its key themes and motifs into new icons of modernity. The moon was a prevalent motif in Decadent literature, as has been suggested in the previous chapter, signifying death, femininity, and sexuality: in the Futurist manifesto the moon is transmuted into an aggressive, masculine, and industrial symbol that illuminates the trappings of modernity. The ways in which Vorticism follows these same techniques of reversal will be the subject of the next section.

One can regard Vorticism’s appropriation of Futurist techniques to be confirmed by Pound’s admission in the *Fortnightly Review* that: ‘We are all Futurists to the extent of believing with Guillaume Apollinaire that “On ne peut pas porter partout avec soi le cadavre de son père”’ [‘One cannot carry about everywhere the body of one’s father’].⁸³ As Pound’s statement indicates, however, this denial of literary forbearance betrays a profound anxiety of influence. The challenge to *fin-de-siècle* literature manifests most prominently, in Harold Bloom’s terms, as *kenosis*, a movement towards discontinuity with the precursor in an attempt to foreclose the

⁸¹ Wyndham Lewis, ‘A Breton Innkeeper’, *The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6 (August 1910), pp. 411–14.

⁸² F. T. Marinetti, ‘Declaration of Futurism’, *The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6 (August 1910), p. 488 (p. 488).

⁸³ Ezra Pound, ‘Vorticism’, *The Fortnightly Review*, no. 96 (1 September 1914), pp. 461–71 (p. 461).

compulsion to repeat, and *askesis*, an act of self-purgation in order to stress individuality.⁸⁴ Thus, Ross's claim that *Blast* constituted a 'tonic for the century' becomes a perceptive identification of the revivifying imperative at work in the movement, which uses the synecdoche of the infected, individual body to stand in for the larger whole of a nation in decline. Echoing Futurism's forceful attempt to distance itself from its *fin-de-siècle* cultural inheritance, Vorticism nevertheless retains its Aestheticist lineage, reversing the terms by which Aestheticism constituted itself as a movement to form a break with the past, but never escaping it entirely.

III. Vorticism and Futurism

Futurism provided a methodology by which Lewis could overturn and subvert its precursor, Decadent Aestheticism. But unlike Aestheticism, Futurism obviously posed a challenge to the English cultural hegemony that Lewis was attempting to foster. Sascha Bru has argued that Lewis's refusal to pledge allegiance to a single European movement testifies to his 'anarchist inflection';⁸⁵ however, it probably testifies rather more to what Paul Peppis has termed Lewis's 'anarcho-imperialism', a term that captures accurately Lewis's need to produce literature or art that could be identified as distinctly 'English' in character, and would extend England's cultural credibility abroad.⁸⁶ Lewis's article 'A Man of the Week: Marinetti', written shortly before *Blast* was published, argued that because Futurism was Italian it primarily appealed to those of a 'Southern' constitution. What was needed, therefore, was an art that

⁸⁴ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 14 and p. 15.

⁸⁵ Sascha Bru, 'Lewis and the European Avant-Gardes', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Miller, pp. 19–31 (p. 24).

⁸⁶ Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, p. 95.

approximated a ‘Northern character’.⁸⁷ *Blast* asserts that ‘the art for these climates [...] must be a northern flower’, and attributes to Shakespeare a ‘Northern | Rhetoric of humour’ that evinces a ‘mysticism, madness and delicacy peculiar to the North’.⁸⁸ The ‘Northern’ is no less ‘virile’ and masculine than its ‘Southern’ counterpart despite this delicacy however, since England is blessed as an ‘Industrial Island machine, pyramidal | workshop, its apex at Shetland, discharging itself on the sea’.⁸⁹ Despite this argument against Futurism, Lewis does not dismiss it altogether, but rather insists that the movement must be adapted for an English sensibility. Futurism was considered by Lewis to be more fitting to writers from England than from Italy, because:

Futurism is largely Anglo-Saxon civilisation. It should not rest with others to be the Artists of this revolution and new possibilities in life. As modern life is the invention of the English, they should have something profounder to say on it than anybody else.⁹⁰

Highlighting England’s position at the forefront of industrial development in the last century, Lewis takes up a nationalist rhetoric to assert an English ‘right’ to Futurism above that of other nations. While ‘England has needed these foreign auxiliaries to put her energies to rights and restore order’, it is indicated that these forces are no longer needed or desired. A separate branch of Futurism is instead required — a ‘Futurism of place’, which is ‘as important as a temporal one’ — that would appropriate the general principles of the Italian movement, but reconfigure it as distinctly English in character, thereby reducing the risk of the English avant-garde’s colonisation by the Italian movement.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Lewis, ‘A Man of the Week: Marinetti’, p. 329.

⁸⁸ Lewis, ‘Manifesto I’, p. 26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

⁹⁰ Lewis, ‘A Man of the Week: Marinetti’, p. 329.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Vorticism's use of Futurist strategies is most often recognised in its use of commercial advertising practices: marketing strategies that the Futurists had used to great effect to publicise their movement throughout Europe.⁹² While Vorticism was certainly enmeshed in the cultural marketplace and engaged with the emerging institutions of mass culture, I wish to draw attention to the broader relationship between art and life that is under consideration in Futurist writings, and which makes itself felt in Vorticism. Lewis's use of a Futurist methodology can be found particularly in his pronouncements on art and aesthetics: subjects that were of course predominant in Aestheticism, a similarly interdisciplinary movement. Despite repudiating Aestheticism so vigorously in *Blast*, then, this suggests that Vorticist literature in particular assumed a broadly similar cultural project as the movement it positioned itself against so firmly. Tom Walker has recently observed that, regardless of its visual abstraction, Vorticism was at risk of 'being co-opted into a tradition of inter-arts publication and explicitly aesthetic writing going back to Keats', and argues that Vorticism constitutes a continuation of 'art writing' (a term borrowed from Rachel Teukolsky) that began with the popular writings of the nineteenth-century art historians Pater and John Ruskin.⁹³ This, I argue, manifested particularly prominently in its critical interventions in the Aestheticist discourse on the relationship and hierarchy between art and life. Vorticist 'art writing' did not attempt to reverse the Aestheticist hierarchy completely, as I aim to demonstrate, but its insistence on

⁹² See, for example, Paige Reynolds, "'Chaos Invading Concept': *Blast* as a Native Theory of Promotional Culture", *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 238–68; Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism*, pp. 118–32.

⁹³ Tom Walker, "'Our More Profound Pre-Raphaelitism": W. B. Yeats, Aestheticism, and *BLAST*", in *Blast at 100: A Modernist Magazine Reconsidered*, ed. by Coleman, Milligan, and O'Donnell, pp. 79–92 (p. 88). On 'art writing' and the Victorian's 'textual fascination in art' see Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

bringing art back into life, and life back into art, it aimed, much like Futurism, to effect a revolutionary art-life praxis.

In Aestheticism, the separation between art and life is generally seen to be at its most pronounced. Aestheticism denotes a specific style of literature and art of the late nineteenth century, which encapsulates a ‘view of life’ in which lived experience is aestheticised, and also a ‘view of art’ in which art is theorised to belong to an autonomous sphere.⁹⁴ Literary figures such as Pater and Wilde expressed not just their devotion to beauty in artistic and literary works, but also the importance of art existing purely as an end in itself, and thus for the freedom of art against the then commonly held view that art should be an expression of bourgeois religious, political, economic, and particularly moral structures. Art’s only function, for the Aesthetes, was to *be* art: the mantra ‘art for art’s sake’ conveys the sole need for art and literature to be beautiful and give aesthetic pleasure, rather than holding up a mirror to reality. Despite the fact that Aestheticist texts do frequently contain dissident ideas and unquestionably interrupt notions of gender and sexual normativity, the movement’s insistence on the autonomy of artistic and literary works is most generally interpreted as a social and political disengagement. It then follows that Aestheticism exemplifies a dehumanising tendency in art, because it not only aims to liberate art from any human function, but also because it isolates art in an autonomous domain, and thus repudiates expressions of real lived experience. Peter Bürger notably described the dehumanising function of Aestheticism in his seminal text *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), arguing that the movement constitutes a ‘progressive detachment’ from ‘real life contexts’: in fact, Aestheticism can only dehumanise because the art it creates is

⁹⁴ According to R. V. Johnson, aestheticism ‘appears in different but interrelated aspects: as a view of life — the idea of treating life “in the spirit of art”; as a view of art — “art for art’s sake”; and as a characteristic of actual works of art and literature’. Johnson, *Aestheticism*, p. 1.

‘unassociated with the praxis of men’.⁹⁵ For Bürger, the dichotomy between Aestheticism and avant-gardism is therefore absolute, because avant-garde movements effect, in their preoccupation with attaching art to the praxis of life, a complete negation of the autonomy of art set up by the Aesthetes.

In *Blast*, Wilde is a continual target precisely because of these Aestheticist aspirations: in Lewis’s article ‘The Art of the Great Race’, published in *Blast*’s second issue, Wilde’s aphorism ‘Nature imitates Art, not Art Nature’ is subjected to extreme scrutiny.⁹⁶ The phrase, taken from Wilde’s essay ‘The Decay of Lying’ (1891), rejects mimetic attitudes towards art in which correspondence to the real world, or the representation of nature, is conceived as the only true model for artistic creation. Conversely, life is understood to imbue characteristics that people have been taught to find in it by literature and art. Wilde’s protagonist Vivian argues that all bad art ‘comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals’: instead, the ‘highest art rejects the burden of the human spirit [...] She develops them purely on her own lines. She is not symbolic of any age’.⁹⁷ Lewis, arguing against Wilde’s aphorism, contends that artists ‘do not, “en tant qu’artistes,” influence breathing humanity plastically’ because they engage with the best and the worst of the world, taking humanity as they find it, to construct art that keeps ‘man in touch with the World’. However, this engagement with the world is tempered by the ‘impassivity’ and ‘impartiality’ with which the artist approaches his subject, which makes him only ‘appear’ to be a ‘confirmed protester’. In his assertion that ‘art is not active; it cuts away and isolates’, Lewis displays an uneasy awareness of the manifold implications

⁹⁵ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 23 and p. 49.

⁹⁶ Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Art of the Great Race’, *Blast*, no. 2, pp. 70–72.

⁹⁷ Oscar Wilde, ‘The Decay of Lying’, in *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1991), pp. 69–100 (p. 98 and p. 93).

of aligning his conception of art with either an autonomous or heteronomous position.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, a similar impulse towards dehumanisation is often identified in Vorticism, perhaps because Lewis argued in *Blast* that ‘dehumanization is the chief diagnostic of the Modern World’.⁹⁹ Lewis’s own attitude towards the relationship between art and life is often described via comparison to the aesthetic philosophy of T. E. Hulme. Hulme promoted many of the artists of Vorticism through his writings, in particular the sculptor Epstein, and thus is generally characterised as an unofficial spokesman for Vorticism, who formulated the movement’s aesthetic theories and explained their practices to the public. This belief has indisputably been encouraged by Lewis himself, who, in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, described he and Hulme ‘to be made for each other, as critic and “creator”’, and explained the relationship between Hulme’s aesthetic theory and his own art thus: ‘What he said should be done, I *did*. Or, it would be more exact to say that I did it, and he said it.’¹⁰⁰ Certainly despite personal differences with Hulme in the pre-war period (for which reason, it is to be supposed, Hulme’s name does not appear in *Blast*), Lewis went to great lengths after Hulme’s death during the First World War to establish a parallel between their modes of critical and aesthetic thought. Hulme’s lecture ‘The New Art and Its Philosophy’, which was delivered to the Quest Society on 22 January 1914 to an audience that included Lewis and Pound and which later appeared in print as ‘Modern Art and Its Philosophy’ in *Speculations*, posited a dichotomy between vital art and geometric art, the ‘vital’ being a passéist, humanist quality inherited from the Renaissance, and the

⁹⁸ Lewis, ‘The Art of the Great Race’, p. 70.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Marchiò, ‘The Vortex in the Machine’, pp. 113–114. Wyndham Lewis, ‘The New Egos’, *Blast*, no. 1, p. 141 (p. 141).

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 100.

‘geometric’ emphasising a disharmony between man and nature.¹⁰¹ The latter is a tendency of modern artists, who ‘avoid those lines and surfaces which look pleasing and organic’ and instead ‘use lines which are clean, clear-cut and mechanical’. The art of modern artists are held to be similar to ‘engineer’s drawings, where the lines are clean, the curves all geometrical, and the colour, laid on to show the shape of a cylinder for example, graded absolutely mechanically’.¹⁰² Hulme’s theory of the geometric aesthetic was principally derived from the writings of Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965), whose aesthetic philosophy treatise *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (1908) identified two divergent tendencies in art since antiquity. Cultures oriented towards sciences and the physical world, such as ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy, exhibit empathy in their art through their tendency to mimic the real world; conversely, cultures that experience anxiety and unrest, such as those of ancient Egypt and the ‘medieval North’, are drawn towards inorganic, transcendental, abstract forms that reject the natural world and express a ‘psychic attitude towards the cosmos’.¹⁰³ Like Worringer’s concept of abstract art, which is revered rather than criticised, Hulme’s notion of a geometric aesthetic is distinct and separate from the world with which it engages. For Hulme, the geometric was derived from primitive forms, and was therefore both archaic and permanent: he argues that art is ‘durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature’.¹⁰⁴ Unlike vital art, then, geometrical art ‘exhibits no delight in nature and no striving after vitality’.¹⁰⁵ Hulme’s modernist aesthetic is

¹⁰¹ Ezra Pound, ‘The New Sculpture’, *The Egoist*, vol. 1, no. 4 (16 February 1914), pp. 67–8 (p. 67).

¹⁰² T. E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Herbert Read (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1924), p. 97.

¹⁰³ Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* [1908], trans. by Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), p. 109 and p. 15. See also Henry Mead, *T. E. Hulme and the Ideological Politics of Early Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 146–47.

¹⁰⁴ Hulme, *Speculations*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

based on technology, but this is above all a methodology that modern artists should follow: it is not that artists should actually represent their industrial surroundings. In fact, as Gasiorek has argued, Hulme ‘maintained that the link between technology and the new art was purely contingent, since this art was “governed by principles which are at present exemplified, unintentionally, as it were, in machinery”’.¹⁰⁶ For Hulme, simply conveying the industrial and mechanical world is insufficient to create an art that is truly modern: instead, artists must strive towards creating art that enables an expression of permanence in modernity.

If Lewis was indeed following Hulme’s pronouncements on aesthetics (or even vice versa) to the letter, we might understand Vorticism to be a continuation of the Aestheticist tendency towards dehumanisation. However, as Gasiorek has recently and convincingly demonstrated, to read Vorticism as straightforwardly interchangeable with Hulme’s aesthetic theories is to misread or disregard many of Lewis’s statements in *Blast* that speak to the contrary.¹⁰⁷ For while Lewis certainly can be seen to evoke a dehumanised machine aesthetic, he also looks to life as it exists in technological modernity to inform his writing and art, in a similar manner to Futurism. Lewis criticises the Cubist art of Pablo Picasso in *Blast I*, asserting that the works ‘do not seem to possess the necessary physical stamina to survive’, and that they ‘lack the one purpose, or even necessity, of a work of Art: namely Life’.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Hulme’s emphasis on the atemporality of art is explicitly rejected when Lewis states that ‘Art must be organic with its time’.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the flux of life is posed as an important part of artistic creation: ‘We only want the world to live and

¹⁰⁶ Andrzej Gasiorek, ‘Modern Art in England Circa 1914: Hulme and Wyndham Lewis’, in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 51–67 (p. 58).

¹⁰⁷ Gasiorek, ‘Modern Art in England Circa 1914’, pp. 51–67.

¹⁰⁸ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Relativism and Picasso’s Latest Work’, *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 139–40 (p. 139 and p. 140).

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, ‘Manifesto II’, p. 34.

feel it's [*sic*] crude energy flowing through us'.¹¹⁰ It is perhaps precisely as a result of these statements that Paul Edwards has identified a utopian impulse present in Lewis's work.¹¹¹ Writing on Wadsworth's painting *Blackpool* (c.1915), Lewis argued:

Much more than any work exhibited in the last year or so by any English painter of Cubist or Futurist tendencies it has the quality of LIFE [...] In most of the best and most contemporary work, even, in England, there is a great deal of the deadness and heaviness of wooden or of stone objects, rather than of flashing and eager flesh, or shining metal [...] Several of the Italian Futurists have this quality of LIFE eminently: though their merit, very often, consists in this and nothing else. Hardly any of the Paris Cubists have, although it is true they don't desire to have it. To synthesize this quality of LIFE with the significance or spiritual weight that is the mark of all the greatest art, should be, from one angle, the work of the Vorticists.¹¹²

In this sense, Lewis can be seen to following Futurist principles to inform his writing and art in his concern with looking to life. The definitive break with Futurism had famously occurred as a result of the publication of 'Futurism and English Art' in *The Observer* on 7 June 1914, which was later reissued as an independent leaflet with the title 'Vital English Art'. Co-written by Marinetti and Nevinson, the manifesto represented perhaps the most transparent attempt by Marinetti to extend the imagined community of Futurists to England. Nevinson is referenced in the text as an 'English Futurist painter', and the listing of Lewis and other artists at the end of the manifesto is intended to be deliberately ambiguous: Marinetti could be calling the English avant-garde to arms or listing them as co-signatories. Somewhat ironically, given Futurism's status as an Italian movement, Marinetti sets himself against the 'perverted snob who ignores or despises all English daring, originality and invention, but welcomes eagerly all foreign originality and daring'.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the manifesto announced Marinetti and Nevinson's intention to change the 'pessimistic, sceptical, and narrow views of

¹¹⁰ Lewis, 'Long live the Vortex!', p. 17.

¹¹¹ Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 134.

¹¹² Wyndham Lewis, 'The London Group', *Blast*, no. 2, pp. 77–79 (p. 77).

¹¹³ Marinetti and Nevinson, 'Futurism and English Art', p. 196.

the English public' and 'to cure English Art of that most grave of all maladies – passéism'.¹¹⁴ Marinetti's desire to 'cure' English art of this illness is, as Jonathan Pillai and Anber Onar have written, indulged by a kind of 'shock therapy': the 'treatment for which will be a vaccination of more of the same through the manifesto — the introduction of passéism under the guise of novelty, to provoke the English aesthetic body [...] to reject it'.¹¹⁵ The manifesto demanded to 'have an English Art that is strong, virile, and anti-sentimental', and that 'English artists strengthen their Art by a recuperative optimism, a fearless desire of adventure, a heroic instinct of discovery, a worship of strength and a physical and moral courage — all sturdy virtues of the English race'.¹¹⁶ The Futurist turn towards life is thus the cure for English Aestheticism: a turn to technological modernity as the new subject of modern art.

Nevertheless, technological modernity is often considered to be a source of ambivalence in *Blast*.¹¹⁷ Lewis dismissed Futurism as 'automobilism' and stated: 'We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars'.¹¹⁸ The same sentiment can be identified in Lewis's widely known rejoinder to Marinetti's attempts to recruit him, documented in *Blasting and Bombardiering*: 'you Wops insist too much on the Machine. You're always on about these driving-belts, you are always exploding about internal combustion. We've had machines here in England for a donkey's years. They're no novelty to *us*.'¹¹⁹ While insisting that Futurism's obsession with the machine resulted only from Italy's belated experience of

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Pillai and Anber Onar, 'Tracing the Performative: Marinetti, Nevinson, and the English Futurist Manifesto', in *A Dilemma of English Modernism: Visual and Verbal Politics in the Life and Work of C. R. W. Nevinson*, ed. by Michael Walsh (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp. 47–71 (p. 55–56).

¹¹⁶ Marinetti and Nevinson, 'Futurism and English Art', p. 197.

¹¹⁷ See Marchiò, 'The Vortex in the Machine: Futurism in England', pp. 113–14.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 34.

modernity, however, Vorticism notably idealised ports as ‘RESTLESS MACHINES’, and blessed six specific British ports, as well as factories and ships.¹²⁰ Britain’s maritime power was of significant importance to its international status as an industrial world leader: by 1914 Britain had twenty-nine dreadnought battleships, compared to Italy’s three, and its navy was the largest in the world.¹²¹ The prominence accorded to English sea-faring hegemony in the first manifesto works to encourage the new conception of ‘Englishness’ that the Vorticists were attempting to promote; one based on a sense of renewed pride in its status as home of the Industrial Revolution, and as an ultra-modern manufacturing centre. But in this regard it also derives its basis as an aesthetic movement to a similar one to that of Futurism: a new sense of patriotism and nationalism deriving from a sustained engagement with technological modernity.

It is arguable that Vorticism’s engagement with technology and industry is not the result of close engagement with Futurism, but rather because both emerge in the modern period and thus respond to the same phenomena. But while there are significant differences in the way Futurist and Vorticist writers treat technology and mechanical modernity, Vorticist writers claim an English ownership on innovation in technological advances, thus appropriating a Futurist vocabulary of origin. Moreover, although Lewis criticised Futurism’s focus on the future as ‘sentimental’ because the ‘Future is distant, like the Past’, he had perhaps a better sense of the Futurists’ project as a whole, which was far more concerned with engaging with the machinery of the present than it was with imagining the technological innovations of the future.¹²² Vorticism’s engagement with contemporary reality as a basis for its literature and art

¹²⁰ Lewis, ‘Manifesto I’, pp. 22–24.

¹²¹ Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p. 85; Gray, ed., *Conway’s All the World’s Fighting Ships, 1906–1921*, p. 259.

¹²² Lewis, ‘Our Vortex’, p. 147.

signals its debt to Futurism: moreover, in its attempts to reform national identity on the basis of an aesthetic movement it is inherently Futurist in scope.

This is not to argue, however, that Vorticism derives straightforwardly from Futurist aesthetics. There is certainly some reproduction of Aestheticist concerns in the pages of *Blast*: Lewis's article 'Life is the Important Thing!' criticises the turn towards life for artistic and literary subjects, arguing that nature 'is a blessed retreat, in art, for those artists whose imagination is mean and feeble, whose vocation and instinct are unrobust'.¹²³ Alex Runchman has further noted the prevalence of themes of decomposition, decay, and atrophy in *Blast*.¹²⁴ There is also, arguably, some anxiety regarding the heteronomous implications of a Futurist position, for while it opposed a concept of art that mirrors the concerns of the bourgeoisie, it was also intimately connected to politics and to industry, and as such ran the danger of pursuing a mimetic form of art in its quest to break free of social inefficacy. The extent to which Lewis's Vorticism treads a delicate balance between the two movements is analysed in the following section.

IV. 'Futurism, Magic and Life'

Much like his contemporary Monroe, Lewis aimed to broaden the idea of Futurism through his writings. *Blast* had been identified as manifestly Futurist by the British press: a review of the first issue by the *Morning Post*, an extract of which was featured in the back pages of the second issue of *Blast*, described the journal as the 'first futurist quarterly' and a 'vast folio in pink paper covers, full of irrepressible imbecility which is not easily distinguished from the words and works of Marinetti's

¹²³ Wyndham Lewis, "'Life is the Important Thing!'", *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 129–31 (p. 130).

¹²⁴ Alex Runchman, 'Soillure, Bomb Blasts, and Volcanic Chaos', in *Blast at 100: A Modernist Magazine Reconsidered*, ed. by Coleman, Milligan, and O'Donnell, pp. 30–43.

disciples'.¹²⁵ However, instead of simply deriving all his ideas from the movement, Lewis goes to great lengths to trouble the notion of Futurism at various points in *Blast*, at times using the term to denote Marinetti's movement, but at other times using it as a broader term to denote a more general style of literary and artistic activity, similar in respects to Monro's characterisation of Futurism as an 'attitude of mind' or 'condition of soul'.¹²⁶ Lewis admits that 'of all the tags going, "Futurist", for general application, serves as well as any for the active painters of today'.¹²⁷ To a certain extent this can be seen to testify to the fact that it was during the writing of *Blast* that Vorticism's break with Futurism occurred, rather than before, which indicates that Lewis's aesthetic categories were not always precise, and certainly in the process of being formulated. Yet he is often careful to distinguish between Futurism and what he terms 'automobilism' or 'Marinetteism'. *Blast* states in uncompromising terms that: 'AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism) bores us'.¹²⁸ Lewis thus recasts Milanese Futurism, in a rather derogatory manner, in one of two ways: firstly, as a result of what Lewis perceived as the Italians' obsession with motorcars, and secondly, as a consequence of Marinetti's overbearing leadership. Lewis's use of the term 'Marinetteism' is notable for its similarity to a later article that appeared on the front page of the Florentine Futurist journal *Lacerba* titled 'Futurismo e Marinettismo' ['Futurism and Marinettism'], published on 14 February 1915. Co-written by Aldo Palazzeschi, Giovanni Papini, and Ardengo Soffici, this leading article censured Marinetti's dogmatic attitude towards Futurism, labelling the Milanese group as exponents of 'Marinettismo', and praising the Florentine avant-garde as the sole true Futurist group: 'Riteniamo che i due nomi di Futurismo e

¹²⁵ Advertisement for *Blast*, *Blast*, no. 2, n. p. [p. 104].

¹²⁶ Monro, 'Varia', p. 262.

¹²⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'The Melodrama of Modernity', *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 143–44 (p. 143).

¹²⁸ Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', p. 12.

Marinettismo vadan bene per indicare queste due correnti ch'eran destinate necessariamente a separarsi' [We believe that the two names of Futurism and Marinettism are well suited to indicate these two currents that were necessarily destined to separate]. While 'Marinettismo' was characterised by unoriginality, an indiscriminate and blind rejection of the past, and was without real relevance to the future precisely because it ignored the past, Florentine Futurism conversely represented contempt for the veneration of the past, liberty, originality, and was the ultimate teleological culmination of previous cultures and creative experiences.¹²⁹ The similar tactic employed by Lewis indicates that, like the *Lacerbiani*, he saw Vorticism to be a branch of Futurism that was truer to Futurism's goals than the 'Futurists' themselves. The Milanese Futurists were thus cast as one branch of Futurism that had no claims to the movement as a whole: as Lewis writes in *Blast*, 'Futurism, as preached by Marinetti [my emphasis], is largely Impressionism up-to-date'.¹³⁰ Correspondingly, in his article 'Futurism and the Flesh', published in *T. P.'s Weekly* on 11 July 1914, Lewis responded to G. K. Chesterton's critique of Futurism as a rejection of the body, arguing that Chesterton's use of 'Futurism' ignorantly castigated all modern manifestations of art, and not 'automobilism' alone. In his defence of Futurism, Lewis identifies himself as part of the artistic tendency, re-defining it as symptomatic of the 'present movement in art'.¹³¹

More than broadening the term 'futurist', however, Lewis also seeks to establish for his readers the historical precedence of a 'futurist' attitude in *Blast*, thereby diminishing the Italian Futurists' claims to originality and setting up a definition of the movement that would be completely autonomous of Marinetti. Lewis

¹²⁹ Aldo Palazzeschi, Giovanni Papini, and Ardengo Soffici, 'Futurismo e Marinettismo', *Lacerba*, vol. 3, no. 7 (14 February 1915), pp. 49–50 (pp. 49–50). My translation.

¹³⁰ Lewis, 'The Melodrama of Modernity', p. 143.

¹³¹ Wyndham Lewis, 'Futurism and the Flesh: A Futurist's Reply to G. K. Chesterton', *T. P.'s Weekly* (11 July 1914), p. 49 (p. 49).

attempts to found the idea of a type of ‘proto-futurism’: an outlook that would encompass a revolutionary, forward-thinking attitude towards culture and technology, creative genius, health, and energy. In his quasi-manifesto ‘Futurism, Magic and Life’ in *Blast*, Lewis contends that ‘Leonardo [da Vinci] was the first Futurist, and, incidentally, an airman among Quattro Cento angels’.¹³² The fact that Lewis’s re-grounding of Futurism remains in an Italian, if older, artistic tradition may seem odd given his overarching argument that Futurism was best suited to England. However, it is entirely possible that Lewis found a common European artistic heritage in the Italian Renaissance tradition. Having redefined Futurism as both a tradition that was not, by necessity, Italian, and yet one that also had its origins in the Renaissance and not in the modern era with Marinetti, Lewis reformulates the Milanese group to exist within a broader Futurist tradition.

It is in ‘Futurism, Magic and Life’ that the dichotomy between art and life is most interestingly played out. While the text is most often interpreted as a unequivocal dismissal of Futurism, this is to disregard the complex reformulations of the movement that Lewis undertakes throughout *Blast* and other texts. For Lewis, Da Vinci’s status as a Futurist is derived from the idea that Da Vinci did not simply imitate life in a mimetic tradition, content to limit himself to the reproduction of the surface of reality. Instead he ‘MADE NEW BEINGS’, and ‘multiplied in himself [...] Life’s possibilities’. This is in direct contrast to the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens, who ‘IMITATED Life — borrowed the colour of it’s [*sic*] crude blood, traced the sprawling and surging of it’s [*sic*] animal hulks’.¹³³ This original Futurism, or proto-Futurism, is thus identified as an anti-mimetic tradition, while the Futurists of today — Marinetti and others — are lampooned for their inability to separate art from life.

¹³² Wyndham Lewis, ‘Futurism, Magic and Life’, *Blast*, no. 1, pp. 132–35 (p. 132).

¹³³ Ibid.

Somewhat strangely, it is contemporary Northern Europe that Lewis identifies as having developed along this erroneous line of artistic intent, and Marinetti, demonstrating a clear line of philosophical thought emerging from Friedrich Nietzsche's theories of the superman, is understood to have been tainted by this connection. The artist of today, Lewis, argues, 'like Narcissus, gets his nose nearer and nearer the surface of Life. He will get it nipped off if he is not careful, by some Pecksniff-shark sunning it's [*sic*] lean belly near the surface'. It should instead be recognised that 'Reality is in the artist, the image only in life, and he should only approach so near as is necessary for a good view'.¹³⁴ Lewis indicates that since its first formulation with Da Vinci, Futurism has gone down the wrong route, in which 'Everywhere LIFE is said instead of ART'.¹³⁵

How Vorticism 'corrects' this imbalance is, however, somewhat tenuous. Lewis's conception of his movement, as explicated in the second issue of *Blast*, is 'electric with a more mastered, vivid vitality', in opposition to Marinettian Futurism, which is described as 'exploding, or burgeoning with life'.¹³⁶ It is important, for Lewis, that art looks towards technological modernity to be relevant in the modern world: however, the artist must not lose control of this impulse, nor allow it to subordinate art in this endeavour. It is thus the extent to which Vorticism turns to life that is at stake, and in particular the degree to which this turn to life can be mastered or controlled without compromising the autonomy of art. Vorticism did not oppose the past in the same way that Futurism did, for while it attacked the anti-industrial and anti-modern national character that the English had assumed, and the Aestheticist movement that preceded it, the movement did not have to fight against centuries of worship of an ancient and artistic past to the same extent as the Futurists. Lewis was

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 134–5.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 132.

¹³⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast*, no. 2, pp. 38–47 (p. 38).

thus able to link Vorticism back to an older artistic tradition beginning with Da Vinci.

He writes:

His [Da Vinci's] Mona Lisa eloped from the Louvre like any woman.
She is back again now, smiling, with complacent reticence, as before her escapade; no one can say when she will be off once more, she possesses so much vitality.
Her olive pigment is electric, so much more so than the carnivorous Belgian bumpkins by Rubens in a neighbouring room, who, besides, are so big they could not slip about in the same subtle fashion.¹³⁷

Here Lewis alludes to the famous theft of the *Mona Lisa* (c.1503–06), from the Louvre on 21 August 1911 by three Italian nationals led by Vincenzo Peruggia, and its subsequent retrieval in November 1913. Lewis's choice to discuss the *Mona Lisa* in 'Futurism, Magic and Life' is significant, for the painting, although relatively little known in popular culture before the mid-nineteenth century, was an icon of the British Aestheticist movement. Walter Pater's celebrated book *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) was arguably the source of this trend: in his chapter on Da Vinci he devotes a large portion to the *Mona Lisa*, or *La Gioconda* (he calls the painting by its Italian title), which describes in poetic, lyrical prose its female subject as 'expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire', and a 'head upon which all "the ends of the world are come"'. In the most quoted passage from the chapter, Pater writes:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.¹³⁸

Pater's ekphrastic treatment of the *Mona Lisa*, by far the lengthiest description of a single painting in his book, does not address the technical details of the work, but

¹³⁷ Lewis, 'Futurism, Magic and Life', p. 132.

¹³⁸ Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p. 70.

instead engages with it on a thematic level, and works to enhance the painting's mystery rather than enlightening the reader. He identifies the painting as the culmination of Da Vinci's preoccupation with the theme of death, the seeds of which may be identified in his painting of the Medusa of the Uffizi and his portrait of Beatrice d'Este, and he likens St Anne and Leda to the Mona Lisa, in whose form the dead biblical and classical figures are concurrently reincarnated and embodied.¹³⁹ Stefano Evangelista has argued that the 'aesthetic lure of death' is prominent in Pater's chapter, and that Pater traces this theme through Da Vinci's work in order to transmit French Decadence to British readers, instructing them 'not only in how to read Leonardo as a Decadent *avant la lettre*, but also in how to reread the history of art through the Decadent sensibility in order to discover there new and perhaps perverse meanings'.¹⁴⁰ Certainly Pater ascribes to the Mona Lisa the qualities of a vampire — one who knows 'the secrets of the grave' — as well as an air of impenetrable mystery that is sinister, desirable, and at once both ancient and modern. Her eyelids 'are a little weary', and she is portrayed as the apotheosis of Western civilisation:

The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.¹⁴¹

As such, Evangelista writes, the *Mona Lisa* 'is a compendium of ancient and modern theories of death, from metempsychosis to evolution'.¹⁴² It was a work to have far-reaching consequences on the British Aesthetes: Wilde was also to address the *Mona*

¹³⁹ *Medusa's Head* is no longer attributed to Da Vinci, but to an unknown Flemish painter, c.1600.

¹⁴⁰ Stefano Evangelista, 'Death Drives', in *Late Victorian into Modern*, ed. by Marcus, Mendelssohn, and Shepherd-Barr, pp. 55–68 (p. 61).

¹⁴¹ Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pp. 70–71.

¹⁴² Evangelista, 'Death Drives', p. 61.

Lisa in his dialogic essay 'The Critic as Artist' (1891). Having quoted Pater's ekphrasis at length, Wilde notes that the *Mona Lisa*, as a result of Pater's text,

becomes more wonderful to us than it really is, and reveals a secret of which, in truth, it knows nothing, and the music of the mystical prose is as sweet to our ears as was the flute-player's music that leant to the lips of La Gioconda those subtle and poisonous curves.¹⁴³

Michael Field, the pseudonym of Katharine Bradley (1846–1914) and Edith Cooper (1862–1913), also wrote a poem on 'La Gioconda', which was published in their second poetry collection *Sight and Song* (1892). Much like Pater, they cast the *Mona Lisa* as a dangerous, vampiric *femme fatale*, who preys on her victims with little effort, since the object of her gaze will be helplessly drawn to her first:

Calm lips the smile leads upward; hand that lies
Glowing and soft, the patience in its rest
Of cruelty that waits and does not seek
For prey; a dusky forehead and a breast
Where twilight touches ripeness amorously [...] ¹⁴⁴

Much later, in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935* (1936), W. B. Yeats famously rewrote Pater's essay as a free-verse poem; himself arguably a late Aesthetic figure and, as noted in the previous chapter, a founding member of the Rhymers' Club in London. Despite distancing himself from the movement, Yeats's use of Pater's text implicitly presents it as a founding text of literary modernism.

Far from being only an Italian Renaissance painting then, if 'only' may be applied to such a famous work of art, the *Mona Lisa* may thus be seen to have a second life as a symbol of English Aestheticism and Decadence, in which the painting is inscribed with the Decadent themes of death, rebirth, and vampirism. This vampiric representation of the *Mona Lisa* combines the intrinsically Decadent themes of

¹⁴³ Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist: Part I', in *Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems*, pp. 1–32 (p. 28).

¹⁴⁴ Michael Field, 'La Gioconda', in *Sight and Song* (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1892), p. 8, ll. 3–7.

corruption and beauty, thus exemplifying the movement's fascination with the degenerate and amoral; in a related manner, it also embodies the attitude of aesthetic detachment. Pater's ekphrasis initially works to locate the soul of the Mona Lisa in the painting, but he soon subverts this reading through his identification of the portrait with the themes of death and absence. For Andrew Eastham, the Mona Lisa has, to a certain extent, lived 'an absolutely discontinuous existence' since she has been repeatedly reanimated; however, she resists 'the protean identity of mythical embodiment' because she experiences each incarnation only 'as the sound of lyres and flutes': her 'elusive gaze suggests her ultimate disengagement'. The historical existence of the Mona Lisa across the ages means that she should express the spirit of every age that she has inhabited, but in Pater's formulation she experiences each only as 'moods', and thus lives 'in excess of this evolutionary telos'.¹⁴⁵

The question of why the *Mona Lisa* has a presence in Lewis's Vorticist text is a significant one, particularly following his rejection of the degeneracy of the 'VICTORIAN VAMPIRE' in his first manifesto of the same issue. The painting's inclusion points heavily towards Lewis's use of Decadent and Aestheticist ideas and motifs in his Vorticist work. If Aestheticism's engagement with the *Mona Lisa* transforms her into a symbol of unearthly, vampiric Decadence, Lewis attempts to transmute her once more into an icon of Vorticism. In his text, she is alive — in fact, she possesses 'so much vitality' — and her 'olive pigment' is 'electric'. Lewis is attempting to purge the notion of degeneration to suggest a more vital, energising, earthly, and masculine vision of the world, re-configuring the *Mona Lisa* as an earthly and modern woman. This change in status of the *Mona Lisa* from an icon of death to an icon of life and vitality is suggestive of a rebirth, and even, perhaps, an electrical

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Eastham, *Aesthetic Afterlives: Irony, Literary Modernity and the Ends of Beauty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 40.

resuscitation of the dead. But if Lewis does revivify or galvanise the *Mona Lisa* for the Vorticist programme, it is in many ways an uncanny rebirth. In the first instance, the *Mona Lisa* is resurrected from the dead, once again (in this sense, one might argue that the *Mona Lisa* as a Decadent icon has *always* been uncanny, since she has been dead and revived many times). But, more significantly, the figure suggests, as Sigmund Freud's formulation of the uncanny theorises, 'everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light'.¹⁴⁶ In the *Mona Lisa* is a figure that undoubtedly embodies Aestheticist tendencies: something that Lewis had worked hard to overcome, or repress, in his Vorticist work. And yet, the figure still makes Aestheticism's presence manifest.

The painting, perhaps surprisingly, also has a place in Futurist literature. In *Lacerba* the return of the *Mona Lisa* to the Louvre was commented on in the form of a free-verse poem, which denounced the painting as an icon of passéism and Aestheticism:

30,000 people passed before the *Mona Lisa* with hat in hand.
— *The press.*

They have found it again, the old daub.
The mirror of all the artistic Philistinism.
The touchstone of aesthetic fetishism.
The treasure of literatures.
The magnet of snobbishnesses.
The icon of past-worshipers.
The paradigm of the commonplace.
The sewer of intentional imbecility.
They have found again the mediocre image of the saccharine-sweet fat lady.
They have found again the *Mona Lisa*.¹⁴⁷

The poem was followed, on the same page, by a brief notice that declared the Futurists to 'deplore profoundly the retrieval of the *Mona Lisa*' and demanded for the

¹⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch and others, 2nd edn (London: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 824–45 (p. 828).

¹⁴⁷ Ardengo Soffici, '13 dicembre', *Lacerba* (15 December 1913), p. 296 (p. 296). Quoted in and trans. by Luciano Chessa, *Luigi Russolo, Futurist: Noise, Visual Arts and the Occult* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 199.

painting's 'prompt reburial in the cemetery-like Louvre Museum'.¹⁴⁸ While this reference speaks to the Futurists' desire to shun the past, it perhaps also indicates the importance of the painting in their artistic heritage. In the first Futurist manifesto of 1909, Marinetti urges painters to avoid art galleries and museums, because he considered an artist's ability to create anew to be compromised by spending too much time in the 'useless admiration of the past'. To 'admire an old painting', he writes, 'is the same as pouring our sensibility into a funerary urn, instead of casting it forward into the distance in violent spurts of creation and action'. Nevertheless, he appeared to make an exception for *La Gioconda*, conceding to writers and artists in the same manifesto that 'once a year you can deposit a wreath of flowers in front of the *Mona Lisa*', in a form of secular, artistic pilgrimage.¹⁴⁹ Luciano Chessa has argued that Marinetti's 'fear of the past' surfaces in his 'representation of the Mona Lisa [...] as the most authoritative symbol of the art of the past, a terrible deity that needs appeasing, once a year, with flowers'.¹⁵⁰

Lewis' fear of the distant past was, as already stated, not as acute as that of the Futurists, for whom the Italian Renaissance symbolised the terrible weight of artistic forbearance. Nevertheless, his anxiety over reproducing the Decadent work of the Aestheticists is manifest throughout *Blast*, and in this must be seen a similar concern to that of Futurism. Following Futurism, Vorticism attempts to link art to life, but the concern then becomes following a mimetic tendency of art, which would divest the artist of his unique role.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 52.

¹⁵⁰ Chessa, *Luigi Russolo, Futurist*, p. 198.

Conclusion

Vorticism was a short-lived phenomenon. *Blast* was discontinued in 1915, after only its second issue, as a consequence of the First World War. In March 1916 Lewis volunteered as a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery, and by May 1917 he was stationed as an officer on the western front. During the war years, only Pound succeeded in keeping the Vorticist momentum going, arranging together with the American art collector John Quinn (1870–1924) an exhibition of seventy-five Vorticist works at the Penguin Club in New York in January 1917.¹⁵¹ Lewis had suggested publishing an ‘American number’ of *Blast* to accompany the exhibition, but the publication never materialised.¹⁵² Following the war, Lewis again contemplated a renewal of *Blast*, but his next attempt at editing a little magazine was *The Tyro* (1921–1922). Unlike *Blast*, the magazine adopted a firmly individualist stance, and it was not inspired by the same revolutionary fervour.

Lewis appropriated Futurist methods of facilitating a break with the past to overcome the isolationist tendencies of art associated with Aestheticism. He aimed to bring life back into art, since the arts were, as he wrote in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, ‘especially intended to be the delight of this *particular* world. Indeed, they were the heralds of great social changes’.¹⁵³ In this statement it is possible to see a definite emphasis on the importance of the present, and on the importance of reintegrating life and art to inspire revolutionary art/life praxis. Yet he was also undoubtedly troubled by the implications of moving too far in the direction of a heteronomous pole of art, and thus maintained connections to his Aestheticist inheritance. Lewis’s sense of the ‘decline’ of the arts was in part a rhetorical strategy

¹⁵¹ See John Quinn, ed., *Exhibition of the Vorticists at the Penguin* (New York: Penguin Club, 1917).

¹⁵² Eric B. White, *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 78.

¹⁵³ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 258.

in the period in which *Blast* emerged, designed to provide the justification for the emergence of a radical avant-garde group and to pave the way for his own symbolic recognition in the cultural field of pre-war London. However, this sense of decline persists, perhaps more sincerely, in his post-war writing of *Blasting and Bombardiering*. Reflecting on the Vorticist ‘Youth-racket’ and the writings of the ‘men of 1914’ — Pound, Eliot, and Joyce — Lewis writes:

*We are the first men of a Future that has not materialized. We belong to a ‘great age’ that has not ‘come off’. We moved too quickly for the world. We set too sharp a pace. And, more and more exhausted by War, Slump, and Revolution, the world has fallen back. Its ambition has withered: it has declined into a listless compromise — half ‘modern’, half Cavalcade!*¹⁵⁴

It is, if anything, a negative rejoinder to the hope and utopian promise encapsulated in Marinetti’s Futurist manifesto of 1909, and indeed the Vorticist manifestos of *Blast*’s first issue. The military metaphors of the avant-garde have, quite literally, become tired, and the war has rendered its proponents only ‘half’ modern. The sense is that of a second period of Decadence, for as Lewis writes: ‘writing as an *art* is very susceptible to shock. That gets upset by almost anything. And to-day it is an art in as great a decline as its sisters’.¹⁵⁵ Pound apparently felt similarly. In a letter to Quinn in 1916, he refers to a manuscript that he had written on Lewis and Wadsworth titled ‘This Generation’, which is now contained in the Beinecke archives at Yale University. Pound joked that he should ‘probably call the book “The Spirit of the Half-Decade” (?? Am. Humourists please copy “half-decayed”...)’.¹⁵⁶ His observation of the homonymic potential of ‘decade’ and ‘decayed’ indicates his sense that the radical artistic promise of 1914 and 1915 had completely stagnated.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 256. Original emphasis.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 253 and p. 257. Original emphasis.

¹⁵⁶ Ezra Pound to John Quinn, 29 February 1916, in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn: 1915–1924*, ed. by Timothy Materer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 62–65 (p. 64).

Vorticism was not pro-war, unlike Futurism, which mythologised the First World War as a trial of modernity, and the means by which Italy's national palingenesis would materialise. But it was nevertheless a nationalist and masculinist enterprise that actively partook in the verbal, if not physical, violence of the manifesto form, and promoted an aesthetic brutality of mechanised, industrial life. Reflecting on his painting 'Plan of War' (1914), painted six months before the First World War began, caused Lewis to realise, ostensibly after the fact, that 'war and art have been mixed up from the start'.¹⁵⁷ Elsewhere in *Blasting and Bombadiering*, Lewis states that the activism of the avant-garde was 'Art behaving as if it were Politics. But I swear I did not know it. [...] I believed that this was the way artists were always received. [...] I mistook the agitation of the audience for the sign of an awakening of the emotions of artistic sensibility'.¹⁵⁸ Regardless of whether the Vorticists campaigned for the war or not, there is a tacit understanding that war was the only possible conclusion of the radical posturing of male Futurist strategies, beyond which there is no artistic direction. In Futurism studies, the First World War is generally considered to mark the end point of its first 'phase', because the premise on which the movement was originally based had been achieved. After this, Futurism's revolutionary credo was greatly diminished.

Using the strategies of Futurism as part of a similarly masculinist and anti-feminist project was always, perhaps, likely to lead to the same ends. But in the use of Futurist strategies by feminist writers there is arguably the potential for more productive conclusions. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest, the female writer of the avant-garde operates from a doubly marginalised location — the avant-garde of the avant-garde — because she exists in the aesthetically marginalised

¹⁵⁷ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombadiering*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

position of the avant-garde as well as the politically marginalised site of the female subject.¹⁵⁹ Thus, the rhetoric of avant-garde marginalisation may be productively deployed to express a real, rather than rhetorical, ostracism, as we shall see through an exploration of the Futurist-feminist strategies of Mina Loy in the following, final chapter.

¹⁵⁹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 'Introduction', *Women's Studies*, Special Issue: 'The Female Imagination and the Modernist Aesthetic', vol. 13, no. 1–2 (December 1986), 1–10 (p. 1).

Mina Loy's Futurist Methodology: Degendering the Modern Woman

In the aftermath of the First World War, having briefly returned to Florence, the English poet Mina Loy composed a short prose piece titled 'Summer Night in a Florentine Slum'. The text describes in sparse, unsentimental language an Italian street scene viewed from the window of an upstairs room, in which 'Latin families' lie 'on the lousy stones, in what they could manage of earthy abandon'.¹ From this perspective, the narrator gazes on a semi-grotesque litany of subjects, including a 'hair-strewn fury' who accuses a 'hungry tram conductor' of being unfaithful; a female victim of domestic violence; and a woman suffering from heart disease together with her daughter, 'a handsome half of a lady, who lived on a board, having been born without legs'.² Retreating from the liminal space of the window, the narrator returns to the interior of her apartment: 'I drew in my hand and pulled the English chintz curtains scattered with prevaricating rosebuds; and Beardsly's [*sic*] Mdle. De Maupin drew on her gloves at me from the wall.'³

Although written at a later date than the period that is principally under consideration in this thesis, 'Summer Night' suggests a compelling point of departure for an analysis of Loy's early poetry and prose. In the first instance, it is indicative of a truly cosmopolitan perspective: Loy inhabits a foreign space that is outside tourist areas and she communicates with the Other. Moreover, the presence of Aubrey Beardsley's 1898 photogravure in the narrator's apartment — the culmination of the decadent motifs of the piece — is perhaps surprising in view of Loy's critical

¹ The text was probably written in the summer of 1919, when Loy returned to Florence. See Burke, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 275–79. It was published in the little magazine *Contact* in 1920. Mina Loy, 'Summer Night in a Florentine Slum', *Contact*, vol. 1, no. 1 (December 1920), pp. 6–7 (p. 6).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

association with the modernist movement. However, it both reveals Loy's connection to the *fin-de-siècle* cultural legacy and highlights the centrality of gender politics in her writing. Beardsley's photogravure illustrates the eponymous character of Théophile Gautier's epistolary novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), in which the Chevalier d'Albert falls in love with a man called Theodore, who, it transpires, is actually a woman called Madeleine de Maupin. Having decided to cross-dress in order to study and understand man's inner nature, Madeleine soon enjoys the freedom that a male disguise offers her and retains her male clothing, observing that women are in fact prisoners 'in both body and mind'.⁴ *Mademoiselle de Maupin* remains one of the nineteenth century's most subversive novels: the bisexual Madeleine identifies as 'a third, separate sex which does not yet have a name', and claims to have 'the body and soul of a woman, the mind and strength of a man'.⁵ Gautier does not gesture towards the idea of a fixed gendered body beneath a mask of costume and appearance. Instead, as Marjorie Garber has argued, the cross-dressed figure symbolises 'that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis', and is therefore 'a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility'.⁶

Although Loy never specifically discusses the 'third' in her writings, her inclusion of the fundamentally disruptive figure of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in 'Summer Night' unquestionably indicates a concern with articulating ideas of femininity and masculinity that are much more open and fluid than those theorised in late nineteenth-century discourses. This, I argue, is a concept that can be traced throughout her early poetry and prose, written after her contact with the Futurists in

⁴ Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, trans. by Helen Constantine (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 191.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁶ Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 11.

Florence before the First World War.⁷ Loy's poems present, in particular, a number of points of commonality with New Woman writings of the period between 1880 and 1910: discourses which I demonstrate were widespread in the expatriate Florentine community in which she resided. These specifically concerned the economic dependence of women, the reform of marriage, and women's emancipation.

However, in 1914, at a time when New Woman ideas were becoming outdated, I argue that Loy's turn to Futurist discourses provided a new methodology for thinking about gender, through which she could work to further undermine and subvert what, following Gayle Rubin, I specify as the 'sex/gender system'.⁸ While Loy's poetry demonstrates cohesion with New Woman writings, she also argues that these ideas and more contemporary manifestations of women's suffrage activism were insufficient for dismantling the underlying structures of women's oppression. Futurist theories on gender are far more closely aligned with New Woman ideas than is often identified in literary criticism, but they also advanced the ways in which feminist agendas could be mobilised and articulated. Although undeniably misogynistic, Futurism's general emphasis on the destruction of the past also addressed traditional gender roles and family structures, thereby offering women the opportunity to challenge the theoretical basis of gender difference. Moreover, in Futurist circles in Florence, a new aim to fight against traditional ideas of sexual morality encouraged a new formulation of womanhood that was not predicated on ideas of purity, chastity,

⁷ Loy lived in Florence between 1907 and 1916. For texts that consider Mina Loy's life in Florence and contact with the Futurists, see: Antonella Francini, 'Mina Loy's Florentine Days: The Birth of a Poet against the Backdrop of Futurism', *Italian History and Culture*, Special Issue: 'Otherness: Anglo-American Women in 19th and 20th Century Florence', ed. by Bruno P. F. Wanrooij, vol. 7 (Florence: Cadmo, 2001), 27–40; Anna Viola Sborgi, '"Italian Pictures": il Percorso Futurista di Mina Loy', in *Prima e Dopo il 1909: Riflessioni sul Futurismo*, ed. by Leo Lecci and Manuela Manfredini (Rome: Aracne, 2010), pp. 67–80; Anja Isabel Klöck, *SPEED Dissolving TIME and SPACE* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Minnesota, 2000).

⁸ Gayle Rubin, 'Traffic in Woman: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex' [1975], in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. by Linda Nicholson, 5 vols (London: Routledge, 1997), 1, 27–62 (p. 28).

and passivity. The movement thus presented, through its abolition of romantic narratives, its break with the past, and in particular its use of cultural discourses against their ideological grain, possibilities for women who were exploring methods of subverting traditional gender conventions. Loy's allusion to De Maupin becomes particularly relevant in this context: De Maupin's confrontation with male contempt for womankind while in her male disguise is echoed in Loy's criticism of Futurism's virile masculinity throughout her early prose and poetry.⁹ But more significantly, De Maupin's position as a 'sexual spy' has strong parallels to Loy's own, self-styled role in her poem 'Lions' Jaws' (1919) — a poem also written after the First World War — as 'secret service buffoon to the Woman's Cause' in the Futurist cultural milieu.¹⁰

In her aim to further emergent feminist debates, Loy uses what I term a 'Futurist methodology', in which she challenges ideological and cultural constructions of femininity. This is particularly evident in 'Feminist Manifesto' (1914). Rejecting traditional configurations of womanhood, Loy proposes a new model; one in which women must 'retain her deceptive fragility of appearance' but adopt the conventionally male characteristics of 'indomitable will, irreducible courage, & abundant health'.¹¹ Her vision of the modern woman, much like Gautier's De Maupin, is a 'space of possibility': a model for transcending gender that radically destabilises outdated norms, and which ultimately posits a means for women to escape the patriarchal system. Loy's call for the 'destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty' implicitly challenges theories of biological determinism and works to extricate women from connotations of purity and docility, thereby leading

⁹ See Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, p. 202.

¹⁰ Patricia Duncker, 'Introduction', in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, pp. xi–xxxi (p. xviii); Mina Loy, 'Lions' Jaws', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 46–50 (p. 49), l. 113.

¹¹ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 154 and p. 156.

women to a self-imposed exile in which they cease to be defined by restrictive gender roles.¹²

Loy's negotiation of Futurism differs to Harold Monroe's preoccupation with reconnecting art and the public and Wyndham Lewis's mediation of the Aestheticist division between art and life. But it may nevertheless be identified as another instance of modernist engagement with the Futurist desire to see the sublation of art into the praxis of life. Loy's work engages with the socio-economic and political realities of women's existence, but it also imbues literature with a social and political function in its attempt to actively transform ideological constructions of womanhood. This is particularly evident in 'Feminist Manifesto', which, in its appropriation of the specifically Futurist configuration of the manifesto form, demonstrates a bid to locate art in the public sphere to effect real and lasting change.

Throughout this chapter I use the theories of Rubin and Monique Wittig to analyse Loy's writings. While these critical ideas were formulated in the late twentieth century, they help to elucidate rather than distort the nature of Loy's feminist project. In fact, the nature of Loy's aesthetic experiments suggest that she even prefigures second-wave feminism because she attempts to articulate a specific kind of social critique that would only come to be formally theorised in the later twentieth century. The lack of critical vocabulary available to female writers of the early modernist period places all the more importance on this literary experimentation. Loy's texts are not theoretical, but they nevertheless *produce* theory: in her linguistic dismantling of gender conventions, Loy suggests a means by which women may escape the sex/gender system.

¹² Ibid., p. 155.

I. Loy and New Woman Discourses in Florence

Loy's pre-war poems are notable for their treatment of themes also underscored by English and American New Woman discourses of the late nineteenth century. New Woman writing may be loosely defined as gynocentric feminist discourses on women that were emerging in the period between 1880 and 1910. It is not synonymous with the early twentieth-century 'modern woman', although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Furthermore, 'New Woman' does not denote a unified or homogenous movement, and is often considered an unstable signifier because, as Ann Heilmann writes, the term may refer at once to a 'literary construct, a press fabrication and discursive marker of rebellion, or a real woman'.¹³ Broadly speaking, however, the New Woman at once responded to and stimulated a set of debates known collectively as the 'woman question', which centred on women's status and role in the family and in society, the ideology of femininity, and sexual morality. Contradicting prevalent assumptions that marriage and raising children were the only ways for women to lead fulfilling lives, the New Woman was sexually liberated, emancipated, educated, and posed an implicit challenge to male authority. As such, the figure embodied for many a fear of gender inversion that was enmeshed with broader discourses of degeneration, decline, and the 'crisis of masculinity' in *fin-de-siècle* culture and society.¹⁴ Although the term had first been coined in 1865 in the *Westminster Review*, it was popularised through Sarah Grand's article 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' (1894), which had argued for women's moral

¹³ Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 2.

¹⁴ In 1895 the British feminist newspaper the *Woman's Signal* reported on a M. Augustin Filon, who had declared that 'the strange phenomenon which is upsetting Great Britain at the present time, is what he calls the "deféminisation," or "masculinisation" of the English woman, or, in other words that she is trying to change her sex'. 'Concerning Women', *The Woman's Signal*, vol. 3, no. 62 (7 March 1895), p. 151 (p. 151).

superiority and highlighted the unfairness of expectations of sexual purity placed on women.¹⁵ Grand did not seek to abolish the institution of marriage through her activism, but rather to reform it: she did not perceive ‘true womanliness’ to be at risk, and reasoned that ‘the sacred duties of wife and mother will be all the more honourably performed when women have a more reasonable hope of becoming wives and mothers of *men*’.¹⁶ Other writers also placed marriage under scrutiny. Mona Caird’s article ‘Marriage’ (1888) denounced marriage as a ‘vexatious failure’ that is the ‘worst [...] form of woman-purchase’, and sought to establish how marriage as an institution might be ‘rescued’ from its current state, concluding that ‘economical independence’ was crucial in order to establish women on a more equal footing with men.¹⁷ Ella Hepworth Dixon’s article ‘Why Women are Ceasing to Marry’ (1899) championed the ‘modern spinster’s lot’ and the ‘social liberty’ of remaining single, and argued that the equality of the sexes would lead to marriage as a more felicitous institution.¹⁸ For these writers, the inequality of women was seen principally as a result of economic concerns, thus challenging theories of biological determinism, and they campaigned for a greater equality in marriage, as well as the necessity of greater independence for women.

Loy has a somewhat complex relationship to this Anglo-American phenomenon because she had lived in Florence since 1907, and in Paris from 1900 to 1907. However, Florence was a manifestly cosmopolitan city at the turn of the century, home to a significant number of expatriates of many nationalities but chiefly

¹⁵ See Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 22.

¹⁶ Sarah Grand, ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’, *The North American Review*, vol. 158 (1 March 1894), pp. 270–76 (p. 274). <<https://archive.org/details/jstor-25103291>> [accessed 28 May 2019]. Original emphasis.

¹⁷ Mona Caird, ‘Marriage’ [1888], in *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c.1880–1900*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 77–80 (p. 79, p. 78, and p. 79).

¹⁸ Ella Hepworth Dixon, ‘Why Women Are Ceasing to Marry’ [1899], in *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c.1880–1900*, ed. by Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 83–88 (p. 86).

English, and as such the city was frequently identified as particularly ‘English’ in character.¹⁹ Many of Loy’s Anglo-American contemporaries in the city were noticeably engaged with New Woman discourses and proto-feminist writings, and it is within this context that Loy’s work should be located. One of the most prominent of these expatriates was the writer Vernon Lee (1856–1935), and although she is principally identified as a Victorian aesthete rather than a New Woman writer because she largely distanced herself from emergent feminist discourses, her article ‘The Economic Dependence of Women’ (1902) demonstrates her interest in the late nineteenth-century debate on women.²⁰ The article reviewed Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s study *Women and Economics* (1898), which had argued for the transformation of contemporary androcentric cultural institutions such as marriage and traditional family structures by enabling the economic independence of women. Gilman had argued that men subjected women through an economic dependency that is naturalised as the outcome of female sexual functions, and that women’s oppression produced a parasitism on men.²¹ Lee’s enthusiastic response to Gilman’s analysis led her to make the following evaluation:

The female *homo*, thus left to rear the children [...] becomes [...] the *dependent* of the male *homo*. The home which she inhabits is *his* home, the food she eats is *his* food [...] and, by a natural evolution, she herself, the woman thus dependent upon his activity and thus appropriated to his children’s service, becomes part and parcel of the home [...] becomes thus amalgamated with the **man’s property, a piece of property herself, body and soul, a slave**. [...] [T]he man and woman [...] do not stand opposite one another, he a little taller, she a little rounder, like Adam and Eve on the panels of Memling or Kranach [*sic*]; but in a quite asymmetrical position: a big man, as in certain archaic statues, holding in his hand a little woman; a god (if we are poetical, or if we face the advantages

¹⁹ On the large number of English expatriates in Florence at the turn of the century, see particularly Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*, pp. 34–37; Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: The Quest for Arcadia*, trans. by Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 84.

²⁰ Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. xiii.

²¹ Charlotte Perkins Stetson, *Women and Economics* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1898). Stetson (better known as Charlotte Perkins Gilman) was also the author of the short story ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ (1892), an important example of early American feminist literature.

of the case) protecting a human creature; or (if we are cynical, and look to the disadvantages) a human being playing with a doll.²²

Lee condemned the ‘stagnation of one half of the human race’, which, as Gilman argued, has adverse effects on the ‘female mind’, and wrote disparagingly of societal conditions in which men could ‘move and feed freely on the earth’s surface’ while women could only play the part of ‘the parasitic creature who lives inside that animal’s tissues’.²³ However, Lee was careful not to place the blame solely on women, for, as she wrote, the problem lay ‘not in the fact of parasitism, but in the fact that this parasitic life has developed in the parasitic one set of faculties and atrophied another; atrophied the faculties that woman had [...] and developed those which were due to the fact of her being a woman’.²⁴ While it is not known whether Loy ever read Lee’s article or knew Lee personally, it is certainly indicative that New Woman discourses were extant in Florence among expatriate coteries, and it is likely that these texts would have circulated.

In Loy’s immediate social circle in Florence, however, were Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) and Mabel Dodge (1879–1962). Loy’s friendship with Stein has been extensively documented in Carolyn Burke’s biography of Loy, *Becoming Modern* (1996).²⁵ Stein had long been an advocate of New Woman ideas: her lecture ‘The Value of College Education to Women’ (1899), delivered while a medical student at Johns Hopkins University, had provocatively asserted that women’s economic dependence on men had reduced them to ‘oversexed’ beings, thus turning ‘a creature that should have been first a human being and then a woman into one that is a woman

²² Vernon Lee, ‘The Economic Dependence of Women’, *The North American Review*, vol. 175, no. 548 (July 1902), pp. 71–90 (p. 75). Original emphases.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 78 and p. 79.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁵ Stein herself noted that the Loy and her first husband Stephen Haweis were ‘among the very earliest to be interested in the work of Gertrude Stein’. Burke, *Becoming Modern*, p. 129.

first and always'.²⁶ The ideas in this lecture were directly derived from Gilman's *Women and Economics*:²⁷ like Gilman, Stein emphasised economic reasons for women's oppression, and these theories were likely to have been directly transmitted to Loy. Meanwhile, Mabel Dodge was, according to Lois Rudwick, held to actually exemplify the New Woman, and she held an artistic salon for the intelligentsia of the Anglophone expatriate community at the Villa Curonia in Arcetri. When Dodge returned to New York in 1912 she settled in Greenwich Village, the 'headquarters of radical feminism in prewar America', where her apartment at 23 Fifth Avenue became a well-known salon for avant-garde intellectuals discussing culture, politics, and society.²⁸ In particular, Dodge became familiar with the work of Crystal Eastman, Henrietta Rodman, and Ida Rauh, who argued for the intellectual, political, and economic equality of men and women. Through her frequent correspondence with Dodge during this period, which is now held in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, Loy would also have been familiar with these writers. She was certainly aware of the campaigning of the American birth control activist and sex educator Margaret Sanger through Dodge, whose sixteen-page pamphlet *Family Limitation* (1914) argued for women to have the right to and make use of artificial birth control, listing six examples of methods.²⁹ While Loy strongly disagreed with Sanger's arguments — in a letter to Dodge of the same year, Loy refers to Sanger's "“preventative” propaganda' in no uncertain terms as 'idiotic bosh' — her awareness

²⁶ Gertrude Stein, 'The Value of College Education for Women' [1899]. Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art, Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Box 5, Fol. 20, pp. 1–12 (p. 6 and pp. 6–7). <<https://artbma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15264dc/id/444>> [accessed 28 May 2019].

²⁷ Stein stated the principal basis of her lecture came from 'a book of Mrs. Stetsons [*sic*] recently published'. Ibid., p. 3.

²⁸ Lois Palken Rudwick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), p. 89.

²⁹ Margaret H. Sanger, *Family Limitation* (1914). Text reproduced in Joan M. Jensen, 'The Evolution of Margaret Sanger's "Family Limitation" Pamphlet, 1914–1921', *Signs*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Spring 1981), 548–67 (pp. 556–67).

of these debates demonstrates her participation in radical feminist discourses emerging in the period.³⁰

The extent to which Florence was a significant centre for New Woman ideas may also be gleaned through a consideration of its manifestations in the city's Italian community. Despite the largely backwards nature of gender relations in Italy, a Catholic and conservative country, the city was home to a nascent feminist activism, because during this period, as Bruno Wanrooij has argued, 'English and American examples were a source of inspiration for Italian women'.³¹ This is particularly evident in the Florence-based Lyceum Club, an organisation that Victoria di Grazia has called an important site of the 'struggle to articulate a new woman's culture'.³² The club had first been established in London in 1904 by Constance Smedley, a member of the Women's Political and Social Union (WSPU), for intellectual women who required 'a substantial and dignified *milieu* where [they] could meet editors and other employers and discuss matters as men did in professional clubs: above all in surroundings that did not suggest poverty'.³³ As explicated in the first chapter, this was also where Marinetti delivered his 'Futurist Speech to the English' in December 1910. Following the success of the London establishment, the Florentine branch was the fourth to be inaugurated, in 1908.³⁴ Smedley was attracted to Florence as a result of its reputation as a cultured and cosmopolitan city in which foreign cultural figures

³⁰ Mina Loy to Mabel Dodge Luhan, [1914]. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Fol. 665. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3483162>> [accessed 13 June 2019].

³¹ Bruno P. F. Wanrooij, "'Exchanging Glances': Florentines and the Anglo-American Community in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century', in *Italian History and Culture*, ed. by Wanrooij, 69–90 (p. 77).

³² Victoria di Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 257.

³³ Constance Smedley, *Crusaders: The Reminiscences of Constance Smedley (Mrs. Maxwell Armfield)* (London: Duckworth, 1929), p. 54.

³⁴ Paris and Berlin were second and third, respectively. See Mirka Sandiford, 'Prolifico storico del Lyceum Club di Firenze fra cultura e impegno civile, internazionalismo e nazionalismi', in *Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze, 1908–2008: Cento anni di vita culturale del primo circolo femminile italiano*, ed. by Mirka Sandiford (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2008), pp. 35–74 (p. 35).

co-existed with Italian intellectuals, particularly those who would contribute to the journal *La Voce*.³⁵ In this journal, New Woman ideas were also addressed: in February 1910, the Swiss eugenicist Auguste Forel had argued for the legal equality of unmarried and married mothers, the equal duties of all procreators, and most importantly: ‘Completa eguaglianza giuridica della donna con l’uomo’ [complete legal equality of woman with man].³⁶ Female writers, although much less present in *La Voce* than their male counterparts, were also beginning to speak out. In Italy, importance was predominantly placed on the importance of the traditional family structure, maternity, and marriage: social prejudice against unmarried women was consequentially endemic, since they were often thought to represent the inability to attract a husband and their lack of offspring signified a failure to achieve the vocation expected of all women.³⁷ However, the notion that every woman had a fundamental right to motherhood even outside the institution of marriage was also beginning to be articulated. The poet Ada Negri wrote in the Florentine journal *Il Marzocco* in 1911: ‘We dare to think that a spinster, who is responsible for herself and for her acts, independent because she has money or earns a salary with her work [...] should be allowed to have a child without losing her honour.’³⁸ In Italy, as in England and America in the late nineteenth century, debates surrounding women’s issues frequently addressed women’s right to independence outside and within marriage, as well as motherhood, although they tended to highlight the legal and social discrimination of women rather than the economic basis of female oppression.

³⁵ Maria Grazia Beverini del Santo, ‘Introduzione’, in *Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze, 1908–2008*, ed. by Sandiford, pp. 9–32 (p. 16).

³⁶ Auguste Forel, ‘Due parole sulla questione sessuale’, *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 9 (10 February 1910), p. 259 (p. 259).

³⁷ Wanrooij, “‘Exchanging Glances’”, p. 79.

³⁸ Ada Negri, ‘Un figlio’, *Il Marzocco*, vol. 16, no. 6 (1911), p. 1, quoted in Wanrooij, “‘Exchanging Glances’”, p. 80.

Loy's early poetry foregrounds issues that were highlighted by New Women writings: her criticism of socio-economic conditions that tied women to the domestic sphere is particularly prominent in 'The Effectual Marriage: or, the Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni' (c.1915), which is, as Christanne Miller has argued, 'perhaps Loy's bitterest poem on heterosexual conventions'.³⁹ Tara Prescott has written that the visual presentation and spacing of the title recalls the conventions of Victorian romance novels, which, juxtaposed with the description of the marriage as 'effectual' and 'insipid' creates a satirical, ironic tone.⁴⁰ Gina and Miovanni, spoonerisms of Mina and Giovanni (Papini), look 'out of their two windows': Miovanni 'out of his library window', and Gina 'from the kitchen window | From among his pots and pans | Where he so kindly kept her'.⁴¹ The two separate spheres of the household reflect gendered power relations and women's inability to actualise their creative talents: the Futurist Miovanni, who declares himself to be 'outside time and space', is able to realise his intellectual ambitions, while Gina has had to learn 'at any hour to offer | the dish appropriately delectable'.⁴² The repetition of Gina's place with the 'Pots and Pans' suggests the amalgamation of Gina with Miovanni's property and her consolidation with the household.⁴³ The unbalanced nature of their social standing — 'he was magnificently man | She insignificantly a woman' — is a consequence of the cultural norms that link '[t]o man his work | To woman her love | Succulent meals and an occasional caress'.⁴⁴ Loy's characterisation of Gina, who wants to 'be everything in woman', is that of an unshaped reaction to the genius of man:⁴⁵

³⁹ Christanne Miller, *Cultures of Modernism: Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, and Else Lasker-Schüler* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 70.

⁴⁰ Prescott, *Poetic Salvage*, pp. 43–44.

⁴¹ Mina Loy, 'The Effectual Marriage: or, the Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 36–39 (p. 37), l. 11, l. 12, and ll. 13–15.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 37, l. 45 and ll. 47–48.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 37, l. 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37, ll. 56–57 and ll. 62–64.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38, l. 85.

here we might dispense with her
 Gina being a female
 But she was more than that
 Being an incipience a correlative
 an instigation of the reaction of man
 From the palpable to the transcendent
 Mollescent irritant of his fantasy⁴⁶

Gina's selfhood is nothing more than a result of Miovanni's actions: she is a malleable personality who reflects, rather than produces, an identity. In this sense, Loy's poem suggests a commonality with Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own' (1929), which suggests that men treat women as a mirror, reflecting their image, and that women are excluded from literary writing and theoretical thinking as a result of hostile socio-economic conditions.⁴⁷ But as the last lines of the poem read 'This narrative halted when I learned that the house which inspired it was the home of a mad woman', Loy also criticises the delusional complicity of women in their acceptance of a limited, domestic role.⁴⁸ 'At the Door of the House' (c.1915) similarly satirises the notion that romantic love can be a fulfilling destiny for women, narrating a tarot card reading attended by women anxious to learn about the future of their romantic entanglements. Loy takes a dim view of these futures, as the fortune-teller predicts a scene involving 'the Man of the Heart | Turning his shoulders to a lady | Covered with tears about matrimony'.⁴⁹ The instability of women's status as objects of male romantic desire in the poem places scrutiny on the social norms of romantic love and marriage: at the end of the poem, Loy lists a number of women with Italianate names who are all, it is suggested, condemned to be inauspicious in their future alliances:

Of Petronilla Lucia Letizia

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 36, ll. 20–26.

⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', in *A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 1–114 (pp. 32–33).

⁴⁸ Loy, 'The Effectual Marriage', p. 39, ll. 123–26.

⁴⁹ Mina Loy, 'At the Door of the House', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 33–35 (p. 33), ll. 21–23.

Felicita
 Filomena Amalia
 Orsola Geltrude Caterina Delfina
 Zita Bibiana Tarsilla
 Eufemia,
 Looking for the little love-tale
 That never came true
 At the door of the house⁵⁰

Both ‘Effectual Marriage’ and ‘At the Door of the House’ are notable for Loy’s emphasis on doors and windows. Doors suggest the ability to move between spaces, from the exterior to the interior, and vice versa, but also between different rooms within the house. In ‘At the Door of the House’ Loy stresses the impossibility of romantic success by placing the action in the liminal space of the outer doorway. In ‘The Effectual Marriage’, Gina is unable to move into the male sphere of Miovanni’s library from her kitchen. Loy’s gynocentric writing clearly articulates New Woman concerns in her preoccupation with narrating the lives of fictional and semi-fictional women who are oppressed in their romantic relationships, and she highlights the restrictiveness of the domestic sphere.⁵¹

Loy’s interventions in feminist debates of the pre-war era materialise forcefully in her poetry, but she is particularly critical of patriarchal power structures in ‘Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots’ (1914). The poem is written from the perspective of unmarried women of the ‘*Latin Borghese*’ — the Italian bourgeois class — who are locked in houses to protect their virginal statuses.⁵² The poem similarly depicts domesticity as an oppressive space for women, as ‘[h]ouses hold

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 34–35, ll. 58–66.

⁵¹ Jessica Burstein has termed Loy’s early poems ‘domestica’ to highlight the household elements in Loy’s work, and to emphasise the notion that ‘Loy’s alienness roots itself in the familiar realms of household and body’. Jessica Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), p. 6 and p. 152.

⁵² Mina Loy, ‘Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots’, in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 21–23 (p. 21), l. 1. Original emphasis.

virgins | the door's on the chain'.⁵³ There is also a palpable sense that cultural narratives, particularly fictions of romance, work to enforce the oppression of women:

We have been taught
Love is a god
White with soft wings
 Nobody shouts
 Virgins for sale
Yet where are our coins
For buying a purchaser
Love is a god
 Marriage expensive
A secret well kept
Makes the noise of the world
Nature's arms spread wide
Making room for all of us
 Room for all of us
Somebody who was never
 a virgin
Has bolted the door
Put curtains at our windows
See the men pass
They are going somewhere⁵⁴

In the poem, Loy explores the effects of capitalism on the female body in much the same way as many examples of second-wave feminist theory that apply Marxist analysis to the oppression of women. Roger Conover has noted that Loy's use of the word 'dots' is derived from the Latin *dotem* and therefore signifies 'dowry'.⁵⁵ This, alongside Loy's use of the term 'virgins' instead of women, indicates that Loy specifically critiques the institution of marriage as a financial transaction in which women possess no control over their bodies and are unable to realise the financial benefits of their own circulation: 'yet where are our coins | For buying a purchaser?'. Virginity is here associated only with women, for a person who is implicitly a man is described as 'somebody who was never a virgin'. Moreover, it is a 'secret well kept' that makes 'the noise of the world', which refers to the unofficial, hidden nature of

⁵³ Ibid., p. 21, ll. 2–3.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 22, ll. 30–49.

⁵⁵ Roger Conover, Editor's Note to 'Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, p. 181.

female sexuality and its function in the political economy. These virgins, however, are unlikely to ever become married, because they lack the dowry to tempt a marriage suitor.

While Loy's critique is firmly directed, much like New Woman discourses, at women's economic dependence and their inability to realise their intellectual potential within marriage, she also considers biological and gender difference as the ideological root of women's oppression. Loy does not simply attack a general notion of patriarchy in this poem — the overarching term to describe 'the forces maintaining sexism from other social forces, such as capitalism' — but more specifically what Rubin has labelled the 'sex/gender system' in her essay 'Traffic in Women' (1975). Rubin defines this system as the 'set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied'.⁵⁶ The traffic of women in patriarchal societies through marriage perpetuates patterns of female oppression: referencing Marcel Mauss's notion of the 'gift', Rubin argues that gender is actually created within this exchange of women by men in a 'kinship' system.⁵⁷ Women are born biologically female, but they only become gendered at the point when the distinction between female 'gift' and male 'giver' is created within this exchange. The gift of a female relative to another male in matrimony allows for the formation of these kinship ties, and thus the transfer of 'sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors, rights and people' to occur.⁵⁸ Much like Rubin, Loy seems to find the 'ultimate locus of women's oppression within the traffic in women', which is not to say the transaction of women as prostitutes, slaves, or serfs, but simply women *as women* in everyday life. It is in this context that Rubin articulates her desire for 'an androgynous and

⁵⁶ Rubin, 'Traffic in Woman', p. 28.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 34 and p. 35.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does'.⁵⁹

'Virgins Plus Curtains' offers a critique of the sex/gender system by which women become gendered objects of male transactions, a criticism that is also apparent in other poems Loy wrote while living in Italy. 'The Costa San Giorgio' (1914), the second of Loy's 'Italian Pictures' trilogy, describes an Italian street scene in which '[b]its of bodies' are '[v]ariously leaning' from green shutters, which, it is implied, are linked to the 'false pillow spreads [...] Already adjusted | On matrimonial beds'.⁶⁰ The narrative of the poem reflects the process of gazing up from the street to the windows of the houses: 'anything' that 'might have contained intimacy' is thrown into the 'middle of the street', much like the oranges that are sold 'half-rotten [...] at a reduction' at the beginning of the poem.⁶¹ 'Costa Magic' (1914), the last of the 'Italian Pictures' poems, exposes an even more sinister side of the sex/gender system through the narrative of a father who kills his daughter, Cesira, with a magical curse because he is 'indisposed to her marriage'.⁶² Here, Loy partially shifts the reader's focus within her ongoing critique of marriage from the female 'gift' to the male 'giver' in the exchange. Marriage is understood by Cesira's father to be a form of property transaction, because after Cesira's marriage he will no longer own her. It is implied that his determination not to relinquish his daughter stems from incestuous desire: he is initially described as 'a rabid man', which suggests an uncontrollable passion bordering on a bestial frenzy.⁶³ Cesira's father asks (or perhaps fantasises about asking) his 'most sympathetic daughter' to '[m]ake yourself a conception | As

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁰ Mina Loy, 'The Costa San Giorgio', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 10–12 (p. 12), l. 51, l. 52, and ll. 55–58.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 12, l. 62, l. 63, l. 65, and l. 14.

⁶² Mina Loy, 'Costa Magic', in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 12–14 (p. 12), l. 2.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 12, l. 3.

large as this one | Here | But with yellow hair'.⁶⁴ These inferences of incestuous longing are rendered unambiguous in the last stanza of the poem, told by the principal, unnamed speaker who watches Cesira transform into 'a wild beast | A tree of age':⁶⁵

It is unnatural in a Father
Bewitching a daughter
Whose hair down covers her thighs⁶⁶

Cesira's fantastic metamorphosis is explicitly linked to her status as an object of unwanted sexual desire, which recalls women from Greco-Roman mythology, such as Daphne, who are transformed to escape sexual predators. In this regard, Loy's criticism is directed at the damaging consequences of women conceived as the property of male relatives.

Loy's unambiguous opposition to marriage distances her feminism from the attitudes of New Women writers, who largely — though not exclusively — advocated marriage reform.⁶⁷ Far from offering women 'comfortable protection', marriage was an inherently limiting institution for the advancement of women: in a letter to Dodge, Loy observed that 'slaves will believe that chains are protectors'.⁶⁸ She was also strenuously opposed to recent social purity campaigns prevalent among British suffragists, and did not believe that reforms of women's education and female workers' legislation were sufficient to effect a substantial transformation of male-dominated culture, because these were superficial changes that would make no

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 12, ll. 4 and ll. 5–8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15, l. 20 and l. 21.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 14, ll. 57–59.

⁶⁷ New Women writers who advocated the dissolution of marriage include Amy Levy (1861–1889), whose 'A Ballad of Religion and Marriage' (1888) argues that 'Marriage must go the way of God'. The poem was only published after Levy's death, probably because she felt it was too radical. Amy Levy, 'A Ballad of Religion and Marriage', in *Victorian Women Poets: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Virginia Blain (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 354–55 (p. 354), l. 16.

⁶⁸ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 156; Loy to Dodge, [1914]. YUL, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Fol. 665.

difference to the fundamental system that keeps women in a state of oppression.⁶⁹ As she argues in her 'Feminist Manifesto', these changes were 'glossing over Reality'.⁷⁰ Reality, for Loy, is that sexual difference has a socially constructed and hierarchical meaning, construed as gender, which enforces the oppression of women within institutional patriarchal structures. She was dissatisfied with the direction of contemporary feminist movements, and so looked elsewhere for formulations of modern womanhood that, rather than attempting to fit women into predetermined structures that maintained the essential oppression of women, fundamentally subverted these socio-economic structures.

II. Futurism and 'Woman'

The misogynistic tendencies of Futurism are usually underscored by the group's declaration of 'contempt for woman' in the first manifesto.⁷¹ The phrase certainly prompted a furore in the European press long after the manifesto's publication: writing in *The Egoist* in 1917, John Cournos stated that 'the Futuristic juxtaposition of the glorification of war and "contempt for woman" is no mere accident. This contempt does not imply indifference, but the worst form men's obsession with sex can take, that is rape!'⁷² In literary criticism too, Futurist 'contempt for woman' has been extensively commented on, and critics have often pointed to the significant threat posed by the female to the male-gendered Futurist utopia. Ursula Fanning has recently argued that 'what happens to woman, and especially to that which is

⁶⁹ As Natalya Lusty has noted, Loy challenges the anti-sex social purity movement that was at the centre of British feminism between 1908 and 1914, particularly prominent in Christabel Pankhurst's *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (1914). Lusty, 'Sexing the Manifesto', p. 252.

⁷⁰ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153. Original emphasis.

⁷¹ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 51.

⁷² John Cournos, 'The Death of Futurism', *The Egoist*, vol. 4, no. 4 (January 1917), pp. 6–7 (p. 6). <<http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1308594997743754.pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

associated with the feminine, in much Futurist writing [...] is not so much a repression and an exorcism, but rather an abjection, as it is understood in the terms used by Julia Kristeva'.⁷³ Kristeva's definition of abjection encompasses not only the feeling of horror that occurs when faced with a 'threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible', but also, crucially, as a 'confrontation with the feminine'.⁷⁴ For the Futurists, Fanning argues, this applies specifically to the 'feminine as it is literally *embodied* in the maternal', because for the Futurists the maternal is a potent reminder of their biological state.⁷⁵ This is particularly evident in Marinetti's novella *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909), which narrates the birth of a mechanical son by means of male parthenogenesis. The superman described at the end of this novel was a ubiquitous figure in Futurist literature, and was an idealised, masculine man-machine that would reinvigorate society with virility and the heroic instinct. Such critiques of Futurism's attitudes towards women have been immensely useful for a deeper understanding of the movement, particularly as they concern the Futurist psychology and the movement's often uneasy relationship with an encroaching and destabilising modernity: nevertheless, they also tend to flatten Futurist ideology, thus failing to appreciate the movement in all its complexity. Critical focus on the phrase 'contempt for woman' has given rise to a somewhat reductive approach to the question of women in Futurism, giving the movement a reputation of having an unambiguously reactionary ideology.

However, recent scholarship has also challenged such one-dimensional views, arguing for the heterogeneity of Futurist attitudes and the complex underpinnings of

⁷³ Ursula J. Fanning, 'Futurism and the Abjection of the Feminine', in *Futurismo: Impact and Legacy*, ed. by Giuseppe Gazzola (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2011), pp. 53–64 (p. 54).

⁷⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1 and p. 58.

⁷⁵ Fanning, 'Futurism and the Abjection of the Feminine', p. 2. Original emphasis.

their sexual and gender politics. As Lucia Re has argued, Anglo-American critics of Italian Futurism have tended to be ‘fascinated by its most violent and misogynistic aspects, ignoring [...] the liberatory and empowering effect that its attack on bourgeois and traditional moralistic and repressive values had on a considerable number of women of various nationalities’.⁷⁶ In fact, there were a number of women, particularly in the years during the First World War, who were active in the movement. Writers such as Rosa Rosà, Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, Enif Robert, and Maria Ginanni have been more extensively documented in literary criticism in recent years, most notably by Paola Sica in her book *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism and the New Sciences* (2016), which explores the writings of a number of Italian women involved in the production of the journal *L’Italia Futurista* in Florence between 1916 and 1918, and documents the ways in which these writers ‘accepted, but revised, the ideas introduced by Marinetti in his founding manifesto of 1909’.⁷⁷ Rosà’s manifesto ‘Women of the Near Future’ (1917) and Robert’s letter *Sedurre o essere sedotto* [Seduce or be seduced] (1917) form forceful responses to Marinetti’s ‘How to Seduce Women’ (1917), and create new female Futurist subjectivities that consider how to strike a balance between a feminine aesthetic and the Futurist aesthetic of virility, masculinity, and violence. The 2015 issue of *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* also sought to investigate the role Futurism played in the work of a multitude of women writers and artists across Europe, challenging straightforward readings of engagement with the movement.⁷⁸ Women’s — perhaps particularly Italian women’s — contributions are certainly beginning to be understood

⁷⁶ Re, ‘Mina Loy and the Quest for a Futurist Feminist Woman’, p. 800.

⁷⁷ Sica, *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism, and the New Sciences*, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Günter Berghaus, ed., *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, Special Issue: ‘Women Artists and Futurism’, vol. 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

to be crucial to study for a more precise understanding of the diversity of the Futurist movement.⁷⁹

Nuanced criticism of Loy's early writings has also been hampered by the superficial view of Futurism's gender politics. Aimee Pozorski has written that Loy's 'prose was originally intended to reject Futurist ideology, but often was reduced only to adopting it'.⁸⁰ Swathi Krishna and Srirupa Chatterjee have argued that 'even though Loy was actively engaged with artistic movements such as Futurism, her verses powerfully challenged the blatant misogyny inherent in such creeds'.⁸¹ Reducing Futurism's attitude to one of unambiguous misogyny tends to simplify Loy's stance as one of pure opposition to the movement, and as a consequence her writing is often judged on its relative success or failure in this endeavour.

The fact that Futurism attracted a number of female writers and artists to its cause may be explained partly by the social and political principles that it claimed to support. Walter Adamson has argued that Marinetti 'understood that women were half the population, were likely to be an emerging cultural force given modernity's culturally democratic direction, and needed to be included in social and cultural relations if these were to be transformed in the activist directions Futurism sought to promote'.⁸² Perhaps for this reason the Futurists championed the destruction of marriage, viewing the institution as the 'ownership [...] of women', a 'legalised prostitution with a dusting of moralism', and as a product of sentimentalism, which, they argued, was a 'characteristic typical of a vegetating, parasitical, static way of

⁷⁹ The contemporaneity of this critical perspective is underscored by the recent exhibition at the MAN gallery in Sardinia, *L'elica e la luce: Le futuriste 1912–1944* [Flight and Light: The Women Futurists 1912–1944], which ran from 9 March–10 June 2018.

⁸⁰ Aimee L. Pozorski, 'Eugenicist Mistress and Ethnic Mother: Mina Loy and Futurism, 1913–1917', *MELUS*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 41–69 (p. 42). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029772>> [accessed 30 April 2019].

⁸¹ Swathi Krishna S. and Srirupa Chatterjee, 'Mina Loy's "Parturition" and L'Écriture Féminine', *The Explicator*, vol. 73, no. 4 (Winter 2015), 257–61 (p. 257).

⁸² Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 100.

life'. Women were to be liberated from the authority of a husband, destroying the traditional family structure: however, they were instead to be subjected to the needs of the nation to facilitate the 'future and development of the human race'.⁸³ Despite the eugenicist tenor of this mandate, Futurism's attitude towards love and marriage was attractive to women who found the traditional family structure oppressive. Marinetti also considered feminism to be a positive movement in France, 'thanks to a magnificent elite of intellectual women', although he also described it as 'harmful and ridiculous in Italy and everywhere else, where it is limited to being merely an outlet for petty ambitions and oratorical aspirations'.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he supported the principle of women's right to vote, declaring it to be the 'absolutely logical conclusion of the idea of democracy and universal suffrage as it was conceived by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the other forebears of the French Revolution'.⁸⁵ For women who wanted to challenge conventional gender roles, Futurism presented the possibility of social change, and a publicity-oriented platform from which they could vocalise their cause.

In England, the Futurists made their interests in women's suffrage explicit. During their first visit to London in December 1910, Marinetti declaimed his 'Futurist Speech to the English' at the Lyceum Club — the organisation founded by Smedley that catered specifically to the demands of professional women. Margaret Wynne Nevinston (the mother of C. R. W. Nevinston) subsequently contributed an article to the *Vote* in which she argued that while Marinetti had railed against women, he nevertheless 'found time to extol the Suffragette', and that among his audience there

⁸³ F. T. Marinetti, 'Against Marriage' [1919], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 309–12 (p. 310).

⁸⁴ La Cocherie, 'Futurism: An Interview with Mr. Marinetti in *Comœdia*' [1909], in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 18–21 (p. 20).

⁸⁵ F. T. Marinetti, 'Contempt for Woman' [1911], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 86–89 (p. 88).

were ‘more than one or two women who would answer proudly to that title’.⁸⁶ The connection between the two movements continued in the pre-war years: during the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in March 1912, Umberto Boccioni participated in a suffragette window-smashing demonstration. Marinetti emphasised this alliance between the Futurists and the suffragettes in ‘Suffragettes and Indian Docks’ (n. d.), which described his and Boccioni’s involvement with a suffragette demonstration at the London Docklands. Yet he declared that many suffragettes were converted to Futurism ‘more by our aggressive Italian physical attractiveness than by Futurism’s ideas’.⁸⁷ Clearly, Marinetti’s interest in the suffragettes was connected to his passion for noisy crowd behaviour and not sincere belief in the political aims of the movement, and he reifies the notion that female interests tended chiefly towards sentimental concerns. Nevertheless, as Janet Lyon has argued, Futurist participation in suffragette rallies cemented the link between the two groups in the minds of the British public, aided by the tendencies of the press to describe both groups in discourses of hysteria and disease.⁸⁸

Loy’s perspective on Futurism’s attitude towards women is made manifest in her unpublished autobiographical text ‘Brontolivido’ (c.1914), which chronicles her experiences with the Futurists. The seventh episode of the text, ‘Rome’, relates her visit to the city with Marinetti for the *Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale* [International Free Futurist Exhibition]. The exhibition was held at the Sprovieri Gallery in April and May 1914, and Loy exhibited four paintings as Futurism’s sole English representative.⁸⁹ She writes:

⁸⁶ Margaret Wynne Nevinson, ‘Futurism and Woman’ [1910], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 74–75 (p. 74).

⁸⁷ Marinetti, ‘Suffragettes and Indian Docks’, p. 342.

⁸⁸ Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, p. 102.

⁸⁹ The titles of Loy’s paintings are: ‘Dinamismo facciale di Marinetti’ [facial dynamism of Marinetti]; ‘Sintesi facciale di Marinetti’ [facial synthesis of Marinetti]; ‘Dinamismo di Marinetti’ [dynamism of

‘Maria Santa,’ exclaimed Jemima, ‘his work’s pornographic, and his morals would frighten Satan’

‘Don’t listen to a word she says,’ Brontolivido interposed in passing, ‘she’s really alarmingly intelligent,’ whereupon the woman’s glare subsided in an obedient humility —

Someone over in the other side of the gallery had flashed on Joannes’ hideous article — immediately Brontolivido as to a magnet — onto the platform harangued the embryo crowd — ‘Indiscutably [*sic*],’ he was saying, ‘this has been a great blow to Flabbergastism — it has alienated the women — which is silly — for they are excellent propagandists — and they alone have the intuition requisite for the understanding of the misunderstandable [*sic*] — [’]

He has not the flair to distinguish between Flab: obscenity — and — obscenity and in his endeavours to become as we are — he has stumbled on Joannins [?] obscenity — absolutely uninitiated, he vilifies woman with his incognizance and in his reducto-ad-absurdum of the sex question he has waived the ultimately terrific problem of the universe. [’]Woman he blazed is a wonderful animal — and when I print any part of her body I chose — it is purest appreciation — I do not admit — that I can write about a fondant which gives me some pleasure — and not about a vagina which gives me infinitely more. That is a beautiful word — that means what I say. — It is a fact — and fact is supreme — It slights no one of you — for are you not all formed in the same way? [’] He doesn’t quote the context, mused Jemima negligently enough for something had happened — Brontolivido really did make things happen to people — he had said one word — utterly unaffectedly — and it had broken down the barriers, of her subconscious reactions in prudery, that divided self-truthfulness from self-expression.⁹⁰

Many of the allusions to real persons are clear: Loy is Jemima; Marinetti is Brontolivido; Papini is Joannes, as he is also alluded to in Loy’s ‘Songs to Joannes’ (1917); and Futurism is satirically recast as ‘Flabbergastism’. Jemima and Brontolivido engage in a verbal spar, which, it seems, Brontolivido wins; an unnamed character then mentions ‘Joannes’ hideous article’, which I interpret to be Papini’s article ‘Il Massacro delle donne’ [the massacre of women], which was published in *Lacerba* on 1 April 1914. The polemic argued that women are merely ‘orinali di carne’ [urinals of flesh] for men: valuable only for their reproductive systems, and

Marinetti]; and ‘Dinamismo del subcosciente’ [dynamism of the subconscious]. See: *Esposizione libera futurista internazionale: pittori e scultori, italiani, russi, inglesi, belgi, nordamericani* (Rome: Sprovieri Gallery, 1914), p. 36.

⁹⁰ Mina Loy, ‘Rome’: Draft Fragments, n. d. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Box 1, Fol. 7. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3862718>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

consequently incapable of becoming true artists.⁹¹ Brontolivido's enraged response shows Loy to be aware of Marinetti's criticism of the misogynistic article, although it is notable that this condemnation occurs as a result of the article's potential to discourage women, who are 'excellent propagandists', to participate in the Futurist programme, rather than as a consequence of its aggressively misogynistic stance. His censure emerges from self-interest, and his views on woman, a 'wonderful animal', remain entrenched in the concept that women are inferior beings. Nevertheless, Marinetti's ability to overcome prudery is framed as self-affirming for Loy, because it negates the shame associated with female sexuality, and provides an alternative to the emphasis on chastity frequently found in contemporary Anglo-American feminism.

Futurism's association with the fight against traditional ideas of sexuality were particularly strong in Florence, where debates were played out in the pages of *La Voce* and *Lacerba*. Women's rights, it must be clarified, were not central to these issues. Emphasis was placed on the 'sexual question' rather than matters of gender, and focused on three key subjects: sex education, Neo-Malthusianism, and the celibacy of priests in the Catholic Church.⁹² The issues were known collectively as the debates on 'sexual morality': a discussion of sexual practices that were considered to be vital to interrogate in order to facilitate the birth of modern Italy. In June 1909, a bibliography of texts on the sexual question featured in the journal, which listed works by Otto Weininger, Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and Auguste Forel. On 10 February 1910, an entire issue of *La Voce* was dedicated to the sexual question, which contained a number of articles including an article on the social value of chastity by Georges

⁹¹ Giovanni Papini, 'Il massacro delle donne', *Lacerba*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1 April 1914), 97–99 (p. 97).

⁹² Neo-Malthusianism derives from the philosophy of the British Reverend Thomas Malthus, who argued in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that the population would increase at a greater rate than its means of subsistence, and advocated abstinence and delayed marriage as a means of controlling population growth (Malthusianism). Neo-Malthusianism, a term first used by Dr Samuel Van Houten in 1877, argues for artificial birth control as a solution.

Sorel; a long essay on Weininger by Giulio Levi; an essay on Freudian psychoanalytic theory by Roberto Assagioli; an article on clerical celibacy by Romolo Murri; and a polemic on pseudoscientific sexual studies by Papini.⁹³ The issue also contained a more extensive bibliography on the sexual question, arranged under topics that included sexual education, Neo-Malthusianism, venereal diseases, and sexual psychopathy.⁹⁴ In April 1910, advertisements began to feature that promoted *L'Igiene Fisica e Morale dei Giovani* [physical and moral hygiene of the young] by Pio Foà, a pamphlet that contained material from two conferences on the sexual question, and was published by *La Voce* under its own imprint.⁹⁵ Based ostensibly on the success of this brochure, the periodical's director Giuseppe Prezzolini announced his intention to set up a convention for the sexual question, which took place between 12 and 14 November 1910 at the Biblioteca Filosofica [Philosophy Library] in Florence.⁹⁶

While not the focus of these campaigns, issues of female sexuality emerged in tandem with questions of male sexual morality in Futurism. The French Futurist Valentine de Saint-Point (1875–1953) argued in 'Futurist Manifesto of Lust' (1913) that 'physical modesty' and a 'hypocritical sense of shame' were outdated and socially constructed virtues: instead, female eroticism should be seen as a power to match the male Futurist concept of virility, to aid natural selection.⁹⁷ The Futurist Italo Tadolato

⁹³ Georges Sorel, 'Il valore sociale della castità', p. 259; Forel, 'Due parole sulla questione sessuale', p. 259; Pio Foà, 'Idealità giovanili', pp. 259–60; Giulio A. Levi, 'Ottone Weininger', pp. 260–61; Romolo Murri, 'Il celibato del clero', pp. 261–62; Roberto G. Assagioli, 'Le idee di Sigmund Freud sulla sessualità', pp. 262–63; Giovanni Papini, 'Mantegazza il sessualità', p. 264. *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 9 (10 February 1910).

⁹⁴ 'Un po' di bibliografia', *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 9 (10 February 1910), pp. 264–66.

⁹⁵ Advertisement for *L'Igiene Fisica e Morale dei Giovani* by Pio Foà, *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 20 (28 April 1910), p. 311 (p. 311).

⁹⁶ Giuseppe Prezzolini, 'Convegno per la questione sessuale', *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 26 (9 June 1910), p. 335 (p. 335); Giuseppe Prezzolini, 'Il Convegno per la questione sessuale', *La Voce*, vol. 2, no. 48 (10 November 1910), p. 432 (p. 432).

⁹⁷ Valentine de Saint-Point, 'Futurist Manifesto of Lust' [1913], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 130–33 (p. 132 and p. 131).

publicly supported her polemic in *Lacerba*.⁹⁸ Furthermore, with Marinetti's insistence on the destruction of marriage came an advocacy for free love: his 'Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party' (1918) argued for a 'gradual devaluation of matrimony in favour of free love and making children wards of the State'.⁹⁹ It is likely that Marinetti had been formulating his views on free love long before the publication of this manifesto: *Come si seducono le donne* also called for '[l]ibero amore' [free love] and even the '[s]valutazione della verginità' [devaluation of virginity], as a result of women's sexual liberation during the First World War.¹⁰⁰ Women were not expected to adhere to feminine conventions of purity in this new model, and were even encouraged to have sexual relations outside marriage. Re has recently noted that men and women are not as defined in this text by their gender difference as much as they are by their similarities: she writes that the 'dread of gender inversion thus appears to be contained and skilfully turned into what for Marinetti is a positive gender convergence'. The positive nature of Marinetti's characterisation of female gender traits, she argues, is evident from his comparison of these to male futurist qualities: women have become more 'masculine' by taking on futurist qualities, while men presumably should become more feminine by also moving towards a Futurist mentality.¹⁰¹ Although these texts were published after 1914, Marinetti's ideas of free love were probably in gestation over a long period: they suggest both a criticism of the notion of female modesty, and a more fluid concept of the masculine/feminine binary.

⁹⁸ Italo Tadolato, 'Glossa sopra il manifesto futurista della lussuria', *Lacerba*, vol. 1, no. 6 (15 March 1913), pp. 58–59.

⁹⁹ F. T. Marinetti, 'Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party' [1918], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 247–51 (p. 248).

¹⁰⁰ F. T. Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne* [1917] (Milan: Sonzogno, 1920), p. 184. My translation.

¹⁰¹ Lucia Re, 'Women, Sexuality, Politics, and the Body in the Futurist Avant-Garde during the Great War', in *Modernism and the Avant-Garde Body in Spain and Italy*, ed. by Nicolás Fernández-Medina and Maria Truglio (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 174–209 (p. 179).

Marinetti attempted to clarify the phrase ‘contempt for woman’ soon after the first manifesto’s publication. He contended that his aim was to make a statement not against women, but rather against the predominance of sentimentalised love in poetry, stating that with ‘all-too-rare exceptions, poems and novels actually seem no longer to deal with anything other than women and love’, and questioning: ‘is woman the only starting point for, and the only purpose of our intellectual development, the unique driving force of our sensibilities?’¹⁰² The same year, Marinetti argued in his preface to *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909) that:

When I told them ‘Scorn Woman!’ they all hurled foul abuse at me like brothel-keepers after a police raid! And yet it isn’t woman’s animal value that I’m talking about, but her sentimental importance.
I want to fight the gluttony of the heart, the surrender of parted lips as they drink the nostalgia of twilights, the fever of comet’s tails crushed and overlaid by distant stars, the colour of shipwreck... I want to conquer the tyranny of love, the obsession with the one and only woman, the strong Romantic moonlight bathing the front of the Brothel.¹⁰³

Marinetti forcefully condemns the cultural mythology that has been constructed around women, as well as, more generally, the sentimental novel tradition and the marriage plot. ‘Woman’ is thus a signifier for a passéist, erotic, and idealistic conception of women that is particularly associated with Decadent and Symbolist literature. He expresses hostility to obfuscating representations of sexual desire ubiquitous in traditional literature. In this regard, his opposition to ‘woman’ clearly becomes a specifically literary endeavour: woman constructed as a sentimental, cultural icon of Romanticism, which finds a second life in the Decadent literature of the ‘Romantic nineties’. This was particularly embodied in the Decadent writings of Gabriele D’Annunzio, who Marinetti castigated as the ‘lesser brother of the great French Symbolists, nostalgic like them, and like them hovering above the naked

¹⁰² La Cocherie, ‘Futurism: An Interview with Mr. Marinetti in *Comædia*’, p. 20.

¹⁰³ F. T. Marinetti, *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel* [1909], trans. by Carol Diethe and Steve Cox (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998), pp. 1–2.

female body'.¹⁰⁴ In 'Against Sentimentalised Love and Parliamentarianism' (1910)

Marinetti further expands on this point. He writes:

We scorn woman when conceived as the only ideal, the divine receptacle of love, woman as poison, woman as the tragic plaything, fragile woman, haunting and irresistible, whose voice, weighed down with destiny, and whose dreamlike mane of hair extend into the forest and are continued there in the foliage bathed in moonlight.¹⁰⁵

The Futurist treatment of 'woman' also bears striking similarities to the 'myth of woman' that Simone de Beauvoir writes of in *The Second Sex* (1949): the static fiction that sublimates 'an immutable aspect of the human condition — namely, the "division" of humanity into two classes of individuals'.¹⁰⁶ This myth superimposes onto reality a 'transcendental Idea' of the 'Eternal Feminine', which becomes incontrovertible because it is 'endowed with an absolute truth'.¹⁰⁷ Thus, against 'the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless'.¹⁰⁸ If, De Beauvoir argues, actual women contradict this myth it is supposed 'not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine'.¹⁰⁹ Like De Beauvoir, Marinetti uses the singular 'woman' in place of 'women', thereby denoting the totalising myth of the class of individual that is woman, which does not correspond to the reality of women. It is a concept that also forms the premise of Wittig's essay 'One is Not Born a Woman' (1981). Wittig, like De Beauvoir, opposes the idea that women are a 'natural group' and rather posits 'woman' as the consequence of a cultural ideology which functions to oppress women: she argues that 'the division from men of which women have been the object is a political one and shows that women have been ideologically

¹⁰⁴ Marinetti, 'We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters', p. 94.

¹⁰⁵ F. T. Marinetti, 'Against Sentimentalised Love and Parliamentarianism', in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Berghaus, pp. 55–59 (p. 55).

¹⁰⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. by H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 282.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 282 and p. 283.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

rebuilt into a “natural group””.¹¹⁰ ‘Woman’ and ‘man’ are thus ‘political and economic categories and not eternal ones’, and sex, which is usually taken as an ‘immediate given’, is, in actual fact, only an ‘imaginary formation’.¹¹¹ ‘Woman’, for Wittig, is thus defined as an ‘imaginary formation’, while ‘women’ denotes the ‘product of a social relationship’.¹¹²

Rather than viewing women through the lens of the dominant cultural ideology of gender, Marinetti arguably understood gender identity, perhaps particularly the idea of the feminine, to be (to use Wittig’s term) an imaginary formation. In ‘Against Sentimentalised Love’, Marinetti refers to contemporary debates on the woman question and gives consideration to the causality of social and historical factors in the contemporary conditions of women:

So far as the claimed inferiority of women is concerned, we think that if her body and spirit had experienced an upbringing identical to that of the body and spirit of man, over many generations, it might perhaps have been possible to speak of equality between the two sexes.¹¹³

The idea that women are products of centuries of marginalisation is a progressive argument, particularly in view of the fact that the statement was articulated when theories of biological determinism were prevalent in most intellectual and scientific circles.¹¹⁴ Yet Barbara Spackman has argued that Marinetti’s ‘consideration is equivocal at best, for equality is postponed until some future, and rather dubious [...] date’.¹¹⁵ Certainly Marinetti seems to hint provocatively at the possibility of gender equality in the Futurist movement before abruptly withdrawing that prospect.

¹¹⁰ Monique Wittig, ‘One is Not Born a Woman’, in *The Straight Mind And Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 9–20 (p. 9).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15, p. 11, and p. 12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹³ Marinetti, ‘Against Sentimentalised Love and Parliamentarianism’, p. 56.

¹¹⁴ Biological determinism theorises that all human behaviour is innate, determined by biological attributes. It does not hold that culture or other social forces determine human behaviour. It was championed by thinkers such as Francis Galton, and insisted on a biological basis for gender roles.

¹¹⁵ Barbara Spackman, ‘The Fascist Rhetoric of Virility’, *Stanford Italian Review*, vol. 8, no. 1–2 (July 1990), 81–101 (p. 95).

However, this is arguably a view that Loy shares with Marinetti: her view that women could not presently be seen as equal to men is evident in her declaration that women should ‘deny at the outset — that pathetic clap-trap war cry Woman is the equal of man — for she is Not!’¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Marinetti’s his statement demonstrates the awareness that women are not biologically determined, and that ‘woman’ is a social and cultural construction.

Marinetti’s ‘contempt for woman’ may be understood as a rejection of the dominant cultural ideology that constructs women as ‘feminine’ and inferior beings. It may even be considered an attempt to unpick discourse: a culturally constructed representation of reality that transmits and creates social and institutionalised values or ideologies, thereby reproducing structures of knowledge and power. The disentanglement of femininity and women in the Futurist programme was a radical gesture, particularly in conservative Italy, and many women, as Mauro Pasqualini has argued, appropriated ‘contempt for woman’ as a ‘means of dissociating themselves from widespread notions that claimed romantic love, softness, passivity, subordination, and motherhood as the primary elements of female nature’.¹¹⁷ Magamal, the pseudonym of Eva Kühn Amendola, interpreted the phrase in 1913 as an indication that Futurism signalled the end of the ‘reign of the eternal feminine’ and argued that the future would revile the ‘age where men were allowed to exploit the feminine and in which she was his slave’.¹¹⁸ Directly addressing Marinetti’s phrase, Saint-Point’s ‘Manifesto of the Futurist Woman’ (1912) argued against the gendering of men and women: both, she argues, share the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’ in

¹¹⁶ Loy, ‘Feminist Manifesto’, p. 153. Original emphasis.

¹¹⁷ Mauro Pasqualini, ‘From the Sexual Question to the Praise of Prostitution: Modernism and Sexual Politics in Florence, 1908–1914’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 21, no. 3 (September 2012), 409–42 (p. 441).

¹¹⁸ Magamal, ‘Il Futurismo — la nuova religion dell’umanità’, quoted in Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 101.

varying degrees, because they are not traits that are inherently linked to the sexed body. As such, she writes, it is ‘absurd to divide humanity into women and men; it is composed only of femininity and masculinity’.¹¹⁹ Attacking the facile equation of women with weakness, Saint-Point contended that women were not innately submissive but naturally disposed to be warriors, citing the ‘Erinyes, Amazons, Semiramides’: women who fought ‘more ferociously than men’. In view of these historical predecessors, modern women must also ‘possess not only feminine virtues, but also masculine ones’ because only by adopting these qualities can ‘superior humanity’ evolve.¹²⁰ As an official Futurist document, it can be assumed that the manifesto was endorsed by Marinetti, which testifies to the more open nature of men and women in the Futurist programme.¹²¹ But while these reconstructions of modern womanhood may be viewed as progressive, they also articulate a repudiation of femininity and a transition towards a more ‘masculine’ woman, and in doing so reproduce the gendered binary. The Futurist woman occupies, in this regard, a comparable territory to that of the ‘masculine woman’ of Anglo-American New Woman writing, particularly identifiable in nineteenth-century texts such as Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* (1895), but also early twentieth-century texts such as Stein’s *Fenhurst* (1904) and Gilman’s ‘Turned’ (1911).

Marinetti’s intention in promoting this new model of womanhood was less likely to ameliorate social conditions for women, however, than it was to differentiate Futurism substantially from *fin-de-siècle* culture. In part, this position emerges from

¹¹⁹ Valentine de Saint-Point, ‘Manifesto of the Futurist Woman’ [1912], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 109–13 (p. 110).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111 and p. 110.

¹²¹ The manifesto was published simultaneously in French and Italian shortly after its official date of 25 March 1912, which makes it likely that Marinetti oversaw its publication and circulation himself. Moreover, it was read aloud by Saint-Point on 3 June 1912 at the Galerie Giroux in Brussels, the fourth location of the touring first exhibition of Futurist paintings, and again on 3 June 1912 at the Salle Gaveau in Paris. See Rainey Poggi, and Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology*, p. 536.

Marinetti's more general desire to masculinise the modern era: a response to a broader European concern over the ostensible 'feminisation' of the nineteenth century, both at the level of the prevalence of the female subject in literature and the corresponding feminine characteristic of the literary sensibility. The 'crisis of masculinity' is also expressed in Anglo-American texts such as Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886), in which Basil Ransom complains that the 'whole generation is womanised; the masculine tone is passing out of the world'.¹²² To also masculinise the modern woman thus represents one aspect of this broader aim.

However, it also materialises from Futurism's desire to reintegrate art and life in the twentieth century, and to attack the wide gulf between the two in late nineteenth-century culture. At the turn of the century, cultural understandings of femininity were both based on and responsive to the sentimental nineteenth-century novel form, and thus closely associated with feeling and with romance. Reacting against these models, which were not based on real life but on outdated cultural tropes, Futurist literature sought to represent the modern woman as she emerged, and in so doing, also effect a change through literature on real women as part of its construction of a new Italy. In New Woman literature, it must be acknowledged, changes in the representation of women were already beginning to take place: Futurist writing on women may therefore be seen as a continuation of this effort. But while Marinetti's 'contempt for woman' works to destroy a reactionary social practice that is reified through a passéist literary aesthetic, it must be recognised that the literary aesthetic, and not the social practice, is Marinetti's primary concern. It is for this reason that Marinetti also distanced himself from the inherently feminised novel form, and adopted the manifesto as his chief medium: a form that is intrinsically masculine

¹²² Henry James, *The Bostonians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 322.

because of its association with the public and political sphere, and because it is underscored by an implicit threat of violence.

Marinetti's writings remain misogynistic: his identification of woman's 'animal value' and his reference to the brothel in *Mafarka* indicates that, in the new Futurist ideology, women are still objects of male sexual desire whose *raison d'être* is their ability to procreate. Thus identified with her reproductive biological functions, Futurist woman is distinguished from man by his ability to *be* a Futurist superman, characterised by Nietzschean will and intelligence, while her purpose lies in her capacity to *breed* the new Futurist superhuman race. Reproducing nineteenth-century medical and scientific discourses of gendered physical development, men's association with the cerebral and women's connection with the bodily can also be identified in Marinetti's declaration in 'Against Sentimentalised Love':¹²³ 'We strong Futurists have suddenly felt ourselves detached from women who have become, all of a sudden, too earthbound, or, perhaps more precisely, have become symbols of an earth that we must needs leave behind'.¹²⁴ Women, in their role of material embodiment are, Marinetti implies, incapable of aspiring towards the physical transcendence achieved by the Futurist superman, and serve only to disrupt the sublime artistic activity with which Futurist man is preoccupied. In this sense, the Futurists were more invested in sex as a physiology than sex as a cultural construct.

Nevertheless, Marinetti's gesture towards undermining the ideological basis on which 'woman' is founded presented the potential for women to use Futurist rhetoric and platforms to advance a feminist agenda. Their aim to break with tradition, set out in the first manifesto with Marinetti's call to destroy 'museums, libraries, academies of every sort' and in Boccioni's demand to 'destroy the cult of the past',

¹²³ See Rachel Ann Malane, *Sex in Mind: The Gendered Brain in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Mental Sciences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 36.

¹²⁴ Marinetti, 'Against Sentimentalised Love and Parliamentarianism', p. 58.

was not limited to the arts, but was intended to revolutionise every aspect of everyday life.¹²⁵ It is vital to fold the cultural ideology of gender into critical understandings of Futurism's destruction of tradition.

III. Loy's Futurist Methodology

Loy's participation in the Futurist programme is frequently presented in criticism as a deviation or anomaly within an otherwise strongly feminist legacy: critics habitually cite her claim that while she found herself in the 'throes of a conversion to Futurism', she could not commit herself to a movement that combatted 'le mal avec le mal'.¹²⁶ However, she also called herself a 'pseudo Futurist' in a letter to Carl Van Vechten, which suggests the extent to which Loy does place herself within the movement.¹²⁷ While perhaps slightly insincere, or even artificial, the term nevertheless indicates that Loy used the movement's theories to inform her own constructions of modern womanhood. Her engagement with the movement's vision of a mechanised world is evident in her plays 'Collision' (1915) and 'Cittàbapini' (1915), which both evoke the modern metropolis through Futurist set designs and language.¹²⁸ On the whole, however, she was not invested in the Futurist obsession with speed, technology, and the mechanised body — the ideology of *machinolatry* — as her poem 'Human

¹²⁵ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 51; Boccioni and others, 'Manifesto of the Futurist Painters', p. 63.

¹²⁶ Mina Loy to Mabel Dodge Luhan, February 1914. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Fol. 664. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3483136>> [accessed 16 June 2019]. See also, for example, Julie Schmid, 'Mina Loy's Futurist Theatre', *Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1 (January 1996), 1–7 (p. 1); Virginia M. Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 29–30; Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank, Paris: 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 383.

¹²⁷ Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, n. d. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Carl Van Vechten Papers, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Fol. 1082. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3868264>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

¹²⁸ Mina Loy, 'Two Plays', *Rogue*, vol. 1, no. 8 (August 1915), pp. 15–16.

to be the lurid mother of “their” flabbergast child
from Nima Lyo, alias Anim Yol, alias
Imna Oly
(secret service buffoon to the Woman’s Cause)¹³²

Loy’s persona in this poem is a spy, part of a covert operation to assert women’s rights within Futurism. If there is a question as to whether Loy is betraying her feminist concerns, as Rowan Harris suggests, it is neatly circumvented by Loy’s self-characterisation as a ‘buffoon’ to the woman’s cause.¹³³ Through the layering of persona upon persona, all distinctive anagrams of her name, Loy refuses to commit to one stable point of view or authorial unity, and as such ‘Lions’ Jaws’ bears testament to the seemingly contradictory impulses — Futurist and feminist — that characterise her writings. Harris has argued that Loy was a feminist gynophobe because she displays contempt, and even a repudiation of, both femininity and women.¹³⁴ While her argument is persuasive, Harris does not apprehend the subtleties of Marinetti’s use of the term ‘woman’, and I contend that Loy attacks the imaginary formation of woman that is also censured by Futurism. Loy’s use of Futurism may be understood as a development of discourses promulgated by New Woman writing, particularly in view of the movement’s aim to destroy the past and unpick cultural discourses, and in doing so she emerges as a writer working towards similar aims to that of female modernist writers. This adoption of Futurist strategies is evident in her first manifesto ‘Aphorisms on Futurism’ (1914), which was published in Alfred Kreymborg’s quarterly *Camera Work* (1903–1917). It gives a polemical Futurist call for the acceptance of the ‘tremendous truth of Futurism’ to facilitate a renovation in consciousness.¹³⁵ Sarah Hayden has recently claimed that the text is less a Futurist

¹³² Ibid., p. 49, ll. 107–13.

¹³³ Harris, ‘Futurism, Fashion, and the Feminine’, p. 27.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 20–21.

¹³⁵ Mina Loy, ‘Aphorisms on Futurism’, in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 149–52 (p. 152).

manifesto than a treatise *on* Futurism: an analysis that accurately captures Loy's simultaneous acceptance and defiance of Marinettian precepts.¹³⁶ In fact, her command to 'FORGET that you live in houses, that you may live in yourself' at once replicates Futurist discourses and turns them towards more explicitly feminist aims, urging an escape from the oppressive domestic space that contain women within a broader Futurist rhetoric of control over space.

Loy's appropriation of Futurism to articulate a feminist agenda may be identified particularly in Loy's 'Feminist Manifesto', which displays what I term Loy's 'Futurist methodology'. This methodology emerges through three principal strategies. Firstly, Loy connects the Futurist ethic of a complete break with tradition and the past even more explicitly to the abolition of traditional values that culturally and socially constitute women as inferior beings. Secondly, she links the Futurist opposition to traditional sexual morality to a rhetorical construction of 'superior woman' to reverse the terms by which sexually liberated women are constructed as marginal, deviant subjects. Finally, she adopts Futurist methods of using discourse against its ideological grain to destabilise and subvert the values on which cultural discourses on women are predicated. By appropriating an iconoclastic and provocative Futurist rhetoric and the Futurist manifesto form, Loy is empowered to assert challenging statements of intent that constitute a defining attribute of avant-garde literature.

Loy's understanding of the link between the traffic in women and the ability of cultural ideology to maintain the oppression of women led her to realise that the primary aim of feminism should be to challenge traditional gender norms and binary gender opposition — a practice with which Futurism was clearly engaged. Her use of

¹³⁶ Hayden, *Curious Disciplines*, p. 38.

the relatively new term ‘feminist’ reflects this intention: as Linda Kinnahan has argued, while women’s rights movements and New Woman discourses typically worked to advocate equality with men *within* systems organised for and around men, feminist movements introduced more radical demands to *dismantle* economic, social, religious and cultural institutions that enforced women’s oppression and inferiority.¹³⁷ Adhering to a Futurist aesthetic provides Loy with a framework for positing the absolute destruction of this past, which includes sentimental and romantic cultural constructions of women. She accordingly begins ‘Feminist Manifesto’ by demanding a severance with past attitudes. Setting out the patriarchal conditions in which women are oppressed, she argues that ‘as conditions are at present constituted’, women are unequal to men. This is not to argue that women are inherently inferior, but rather that in their current state of oppression there is no possibility of equality between the sexes: ‘be Brave & deny at the outset—that pathetic clap-trap war cry Woman is the equal of man—for She is NOT!’¹³⁸ The manifesto addresses women directly in the second person to argue forcefully for a new direction in thinking. Women should cease ‘to place [their] confidence in economic legislation, vice-crusades & uniform education’ for, Loy argues, these endeavours are ‘glossing over Reality’.¹³⁹ While Loy concedes that professional and commercial career prospects were beginning to be made available to women, these relatively minor, superficial changes were not enough to fundamentally overturn the essential oppression of women in patriarchal society. Loy announces that women’s self-realisation comes at the cost of a ‘devastating psychological upheaval’ in which all their ‘pet illusions must be unmasked’.¹⁴⁰ It is

¹³⁷ Linda A. Kinnahan, ‘Feminist Poetics: First-Wave Feminism, Theory, and Modernist Women Poets’, in *Literature and the Development of Feminist Theory*, ed. by Robin Truth Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 54–68 (p. 55).

¹³⁸ Loy, ‘Feminist Manifesto’, p. 153. Original emphasis.

¹³⁹ Ibid. Original emphasis.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

‘the lies of the centuries’, as she terms the ‘fictitious’ values that constitute women as a natural group, that ‘have got to go’, and she rhetorically questions: ‘are you prepared for the Wrench?’¹⁴¹ In the process of this upheaval there can be ‘no half-measure’, because ‘NO scratching on the surface of the rubbish heap of tradition, will bring about Reform, the only method is Absolute Demolition’.¹⁴²

Loy argues that to be feminine — that is, to be a gendered subject — is to be defined accordingly by one’s status as married or unmarried: as such, a woman’s choice is between ‘Parasitism & Prostitution—or Negation’.¹⁴³ Loy is keen throughout her manifesto to expose the false values on which being a woman is based: she argues against the ‘fictitious value of a woman as identified with her physical purity’.¹⁴⁴ To combat such values, Loy demands the following:

the first self-enforced law for the female sex, as a protection against the man made bogey of virtue—which is the principal instrument of her subjection, would be the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty—. ¹⁴⁵

As in ‘Virgins Plus Curtains’, Loy asserts that virginity is a standard that applies only to women; a culturally constructed marker of gender that is created, in spite of its fundamental instability as a sign, as symbol of uncontaminated reproductive potential, which is the source of female oppression. Yet by referring to the ‘surgical’ destruction of virginity in women at adolescence, Loy is clearly referring to the operation of the removal of the hymen: as such, virginity is firmly located in a bodily attribute of women, despite its coexisting ‘fictitious’ status as a signifier of purity, chastity, and intactness. Although the hymen is a specific part of a material body, it also functions as a metaphor and metonym for women’s relations to and with men, and for relations

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Original emphasis.

¹⁴² Ibid. Original emphasis.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 154. Original emphasis.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 154–55. Original emphasis.

between men in cultural systems in which women figure as objects of exchange. The contradiction in ‘Feminist Manifesto’ between the culturally constructed and material ‘fact’ of the body makes the process of thinking about Loy’s understanding of gender identity far more complex. The impetus to include such a radical demand, as Loy writes in a letter to Dodge, was formed by that which had been ‘suggested by other women years ago — see Havelock Ellis’.¹⁴⁶ It is highly likely that the Ellis text from which Loy derived her radical notion of the destruction of virginity is volume six of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1910), in which Ellis writes:

This fact has even led some to advocate the ‘abolition of physical virginity’. Thus the German authoress of *Una Poenitentium* (1907), considering that the protection of a woman is by no means so well secured by a little piece of membrane as by the presence of a true and watchful soul inside, advocates the operation of removal of the hymen in childhood. It is undoubtedly true that the undue importance attached to the hymen has led to a false conception of feminine “honour,” and to an unwholesome conception of feminine purity.¹⁴⁷

This text has not been identified in extant Loy criticism. Ellis refers to a 1906 German text titled *Jungfräulichkeit?: Una poenitentium* [Virginity?: A poenitentium], which, despite Ellis referring to a female author, remains anonymously written in publications of the text. Nevertheless, Ellis’s text is clearly a critique of woman as commodity in early twentieth-century culture, and suggests that the creation of gender emerges through a bodily marker that facilitates the exchange of women. Loy’s solution to the exchange of women as property, inspired by Ellis’s and the unknown female author’s pronouncements on the subject, is to destroy not only the *idea* of virginity — that is, by insisting on its mythical status — but also by demolishing the very bodily attribute that signifies such a concept. In so doing, Loy articulates an attempt to remove women from the sex/gender system by which they become gendered subjects. Laura Scuriatti has argued that there is a paradox that characterises Loy’s manifesto, namely that in

¹⁴⁶ Loy to Dodge, [1914]. YUL, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Fol. 665.

¹⁴⁷ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 6 vols (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1910), VI: *Sex in Relation to Society*, 404.

her ‘attempt to provide new instruments for reconsidering women and their bodies’ there is an ‘unresolved tension’ between the identification of the ‘cultural creation of femininity as the negative of masculinity, and an essentialist stance which grounds women’s core essence in their bodies which, however, are seen as the product of a cultural and economic discourse, and not as naturally given’.¹⁴⁸ Certainly, Loy seems to consider the causality of women’s oppression as both biological and cultural: however, she turns to a medical concept of femininity and virginity in order to destroy its cultural construction, precisely because it is, as Ellis writes, the excessive importance attached to the hymen (the material body) that has led to exploitative conceptions of feminine purity (the gendered body).

Reacting against these fictitious concepts of femininity, and co-opting Futurism’s opposition to traditional sexual morality, Loy formulates a new, modern woman, which she terms ‘superior woman’. Her critique of marriage as a form of parasitism echoes Marinetti’s rejection of the institution: her declaration that ‘[l]ove is the parasitism of the weak’ in particular bears resemblance to Marinetti’s condemnation of sentimentalism as a characteristic typical of a ‘parasitical, static way of life’.¹⁴⁹ She argues for the right of women to be mothers outside marriage (‘Every woman has a right to maternity’) and even argues that the modern woman must be ‘un-self-conscious in sex’.¹⁵⁰ Loy adopts Futurism’s iconoclastic and confrontational rhetoric to effect a reversal of the terms by which the sexually liberated woman is constrained to the margins. While the Futurists used the inherently political manifesto

¹⁴⁸ Laura Scuriatti, ‘Bodies of Discomfort: Mina Loy, the Futurists and Feminism in Italy between the Wars’, in *Women in Europe Between the Wars*, ed. by Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongur (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 131–42 (p. 137).

¹⁴⁹ Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, 30 January [1915]. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Carl Van Vechten Papers, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Fol. 1082. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3868902>> [accessed 16 June 2019]; Marinetti, ‘Against Marriage’, p. 310.

¹⁵⁰ Loy, ‘Feminist Manifesto’, p. 155 and p. 154.

form to strengthen their status as a heretical force in the cultural field, and thus to speak from an aesthetically marginal position, Loy appropriates the rhetoric of the genre for more apposite means. Using the form to articulate the interests of an actually politically and socially marginalised group, she argues that the sexually deviant woman is in fact a more evolved manifestation of womanhood, and she recalibrates this model rhetorically as ‘superior woman’.¹⁵¹ It seems likely that Loy adopts the word ‘superior’ from Saint-Point, because Marinetti did not use the term in his manifestos; however, it may be understood to convey a female form of Futurist genius, and even to correspond to the male-gendered ideal of the superman. In fact, Loy’s surgical intervention in the female body is comparable to Marinetti’s idea of bodily intervention implicit in the superman: while Marinetti’s future man is mediated by mechanical technology, Loy’s superior women are transformed by the technology of medicine.

It is notable that Loy’s assertion of ‘superior woman’ also carries eugenicist connotations that had similarly emerged in certain manifestations of New Woman literature of the *fin de siècle*. She claims: ‘Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex’.¹⁵² As Angelique Richardson has argued, eugenic feminism emphasised the ‘rational selection of a reproductive partner in order to better serve the state through breeding’, resulting in a ‘maternalist agenda’.¹⁵³ New theories of sexual selection, informed by Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1871), suggested the need for an improvement of women’s rights as a result of

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 9.

women's importance in transmitting heritable traits.¹⁵⁴ With these rights would come increasing freedom from husbands, but women were also to be increasingly bound to the nation in their roles as mothers to the race. Loy's idea of 'race-responsibility' as one of the primary motivations of 'superior woman' echoes this cause, for she writes: 'For the harmony of the race, each individual should be the expression of an easy and ample interpenetration of the male and female temperaments—free of stress'.¹⁵⁵ Although undoubtedly a cosmopolitan figure, Loy's idea of race-responsibility is certainly one aspect of her thinking in which a nationalist imperative is discernable: her 'superior woman' is, among other things, a nationalist feminist subject, which coheres to Marinetti's vision of women as incubators for the new Futurist race.

Nevertheless, Loy works to destabilise the very concept of the feminine in her 'Feminist Manifesto', and in doing so open up possibilities for what it means to be a woman. She does this particularly through recalibrating concepts of femininity that had been taxonomised by sexology texts of the *fin de siècle*, which, as has been established, were popular among Florentine Futurists. Using the language of sexology discourses against its ideological grain to challenge cultural narratives of womanhood, Loy particularly took aim at the theories of Weininger, whose *Sex and Character* (1903) had been published in English in 1906, and in Italian in 1912.¹⁵⁶ It was read by Prezzolini in the original German in 1906, and Papini, who declared it to be a 'masterpiece', had read it by 1908.¹⁵⁷ The text formed a contribution to the 'woman question' and the issue of female emancipation, and aimed to combine 'the psychical

¹⁵⁴ According to Antoinette Burton, many feminists argued that women's racial responsibilities should lead to complete equality in the public sphere, thereby transforming women's 'national function' into a 'national duty', and subsequently as a justification for inclusion in Britain's government. Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and British Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 50–52.

¹⁵⁵ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 155.

¹⁵⁶ Harris also discusses Weininger in her article, although she interprets Loy's turn to his theories as a source for her gynophobia, a reading that I contest. Harris, 'Futurism, Fashion, and the Feminine', pp. 21–23.

¹⁵⁷ Giovanni Papini, quoted in Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*, p. 122.

differences between the sexes into a system': Weininger claimed to deal 'not with women, but with woman'.¹⁵⁸ He argued that in all humans there was 'a certain persistence of the bisexual character', and that 'there exist all sorts of intermediate conditions between male and female — sexual transitional forms'.¹⁵⁹ 'Man' and 'woman' are thus idealised categories, while real men and women existed on a spectrum between the masculine and feminine. Although this theory seems revolutionary for its time, Weininger's principle of a binary opposition of personality, which he associated with the masculine, and impersonality, which he identified with femininity, remain rooted in the notion that men contained — and should contain — more aspects of the masculine, while women exhibited more femininity. The 'masculine' aspect is positively described as active, conscious, and logical, while the 'feminine' aspect is characterised as passive, unconscious, and amoral.¹⁶⁰ The impersonality of woman is explained in terms of woman as a mirror to man's genius, much in the same way that Gina, in Loy's 'Effectual Marriage', is portrayed as 'an instigation of the reaction of man': Weininger theorised that woman 'prefers man to mould her mentally [...] She rejoices in being dependent', and opposed women's emancipation as harmful and unnatural.¹⁶¹ Loy's attention to this text, and her challenge to its tenets, is discernable through the distinctly Weiningerian terminology she uses:

The man who lives a life in which his activities conform to a social code which is a protectorate of the feminine element—
is no longer masculine
The women who adapt themselves to a theoretical valuation of their sex as a relative impersonality, are not yet Feminine¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1906), p. ix.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5 and p. 7.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–10.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

¹⁶² Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153–54. Original emphasis.

From the time at which her manifesto is announced, Loy declares, conventions in gendered identity are no longer acceptable. She specifically rejects the political and economic power of men over women, removing its association with masculinity; meanwhile, women who become the passive reflection of man are no longer feminine. Disrupting the ideological basis for women's identity as impersonal and submissive, Loy argues that women must instead realise concrete values within themselves: 'Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not—seek within yourselves to find out what you are.'¹⁶³ Exposing the instability of 'woman' and 'femininity' as fixed concepts, Loy poses the possibility of new conceptions of womanhood, which come closer to traditionally 'masculine' qualities in their formation.

Loy continues to challenge Weininger's ideological basis for womanhood by reconceptualising past attitudes to female sexuality. She attacks Weininger's misogynistic claim of the existence of only two 'types' of woman — the mother and the prostitute — who are defined accordingly by their inclination to reproduce or by their deviant expression of sexual desire.¹⁶⁴ She writes:

The first illusion it is in your interest to demolish is the division of woman into two classes the mistress, & the mother every well-balanced & well-developed woman knows that is not true, Nature has endowed the complete woman with a faculty for expressing herself through all her functions¹⁶⁵

For Weininger, woman is wholly sexual, 'engrossed exclusively by sexuality', while man, conversely, can transcend his sexuality: man 'can know about his sexuality, whilst a woman is unconscious of it and can in all good faith deny it, because she is [...] sexuality itself'.¹⁶⁶ Because 'woman desires coitus and not love', he argues, 'she proves that she wishes to be humiliated and not worshipped', and as such, 'the

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁶⁴ Weininger, *Sex and Character*, pp. 214–35.

¹⁶⁵ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 154. Original emphasis.

¹⁶⁶ Weininger, *Sex and Character*, p. 260 and p. 92.

ultimate opponent of the emancipation of women is Woman'.¹⁶⁷ Loy resists these negative implications of woman's sexuality. Reversing Weininger's dichotomy between sensuality (a negative attribute) and love (a positive attribute), Loy argues that women must in fact destroy not their sensuality, but their 'desire to be loved', thereby locating their 'impersonality' and social inequality in women's need to conform to established patriarchal notions of female sexuality. For Loy, 'there is nothing impure in sex—except in the mental attitude towards it'.¹⁶⁸ Women who conform to models of either mistress or mother display an 'inferior mentality', but, most significantly, will 'enjoy an inadequate apprehension of Life'.¹⁶⁹ Loy's concern is therefore to challenge the binary fictions — such as the angel of the house and the overtly sexualised *femme fatale* — on which 'woman' is based. By contesting these cultural constructions of womanhood, Loy attempts to bring art closer to real life; she also, through her writing, aims to transform life, stimulating a revolutionary ethos in her female readers, to whom 'Feminist Manifesto' is explicitly addressed. In this sense, she is, like Monro and Lewis, also heavily invested in the Futurist endeavour to reconnect art and life, and adopts their strategies of communication to enable this aim.

Loy's use of Weiningerian terminology against its ideological intent in 'Feminist Manifesto' may be identified to a certain extent as a manifestation of Michel Foucault's concept of reverse discourse. Although her manifesto does not extend to challenging heterosexual conventions, as Foucault's term is primarily intended to convey, it certainly makes use of the discursive space that Weininger opens up in his text to condemn and reverse his pronouncements on womanhood, and therefore operates through a similar strategy: Foucault states that if discourse is a medium through which power flows, another discourse runs in parallel which

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 336.

¹⁶⁸ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 156. Original emphasis.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 154. Original emphasis.

‘undermine[s] and expose[s]’ its power.¹⁷⁰ But the technique also bears relation to Marinetti’s use of Symbolist and Decadent language and imagery, particularly in the first manifesto and ‘Let’s Murder the Moonlight!’ (1909), to subvert and overthrow his literary precursors: motifs of oriental carpets, filigreed brass domes, and mosque lamps are deployed at the beginning of the ‘Founding’ manifesto only for them to be destabilised.¹⁷¹ Loy’s method of subversion, following Futurism’s theories, is not to destroy or repudiate womanhood as a sexed category, but rather to destabilise the gendering of women through harmful ‘fictitious values’, which render them incomplete and unable to apprehend ‘life’. It is suggested, however, that the modern woman must retain a veneer of traditionally conceived femininity, and in this sense, Loy’s modern woman must also to a certain extent be a fiction: ‘Woman must for her happiness retain her deceptive fragility of appearance, combined with indomitable will, irreducible courage, & abundant health the outcome of sound nerves’.¹⁷² Loy does consider femininity a fictitious concept, but argues that women must retain this deception. Through her critique of normative gender attributes, Loy modifies womanhood for the modern era.

Loy’s use of sexological texts to inform her new formulations of womanhood places her writing in dialogue with later work by other female modernist writers. Writing against dominant patriarchal discourses in a process of re-reading, or what Adrienne Rich terms ‘re-visioning’ — the feminist act of looking back and of ‘entering an old text from a new critical direction’ — becomes a powerful tool for the

¹⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 4 vols (London: Penguin, 1998), I: *The Will to Knowledge*, 101.

¹⁷¹ Marinetti, ‘Founding and Manifesto’, p. 49.

¹⁷² Loy, ‘Feminist Manifesto’, p. 156.

critique of male-dominated society.¹⁷³ The textual space became a means by which female writers could creatively explore the artificiality of gendered categories in scientific and sexological discourses. Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel* (1919), the fourth volume of the *Pilgrimage* series (1915–1935), which chronicles the life of Miriam Henderson between 1893 and 1912, very clearly articulates these concerns. In a bid to join intellectual circles in London in the late 1890s, Miriam attempts to assimilate information quickly by reading what Joanne Winning has identified as the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the British Library.¹⁷⁴ In doing so, she encounters Social Darwinist ideas by writers such as Patrick Geddes, author of *The Evolution of Sex* (1889), who argued that women constitute an 'undeveloped' version of man, and therefore embody a form of arrested development.¹⁷⁵ The act of reading becomes a violent encounter with masculine discourses as Miriam becomes 'goaded to madness', and even considers the possibility of suicide.¹⁷⁶ In a similar, although less invasive encounter, Woolf writes in 'A Room of One's Own' of a fictionalised Professor von X, whose treatise '*The Mental, Moral, and Psychological Inferiority of the Female Sex*' is an imagined amalgamation of the various works of masculine discourses that Woolf's narrator reads in the British Library; discourses that the narrator describes as 'distressing', 'bewildering', and 'humiliating'.¹⁷⁷ The text becomes explicitly linked to Freudian psychoanalysis through the narrator's consideration of the professor's scholarly motivations:

Had he been laughed at, to adopt the Freudian theory, in his cradle by a pretty girl? For even in his cradle the professor, I thought, could not have been an

¹⁷³ Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', *College English*, vol. 34, no. 1, *Women, Writing and Teaching* (October 1972), 18–30 (p. 18). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/375215>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

¹⁷⁴ Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 53–54.

¹⁷⁵ Patrick Geddes, 'Reproduction', in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 21 (1886). Identified in Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁶ Dorothy Richardson, *The Tunnel* (London: Duckworth, 1919), p. 234.

¹⁷⁷ Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 28 and p. 27.

attractive child. Whatever the reason, the professor was made to look very angry and very ugly in my sketch, as he wrote his great book upon the mental, moral and physical inferiority of women.¹⁷⁸

Writing back against these discourses emerged in many different variations across female modernism and cannot be comprehensively documented in this chapter. But it is significant that much of this feminist literary experimentation involved considerations of ungendered models of womanhood, and those of a third or intermediate sex. These often articulated lesbian tendencies, and a disruption of heteronormative relationships.¹⁷⁹ Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) identifies the androgynous Robin Vote as 'third sex' to indicate her queerness, and Richardson similarly constructs Miriam as a 'third' throughout the *Pilgrimage* novels.¹⁸⁰ However, the model also worked more broadly to dismantle traditional gender categories and roles: as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued, modern women explored androgyny as an opportunity to become both 'social and sexual hermaphrodites, as an "intermediate sex" that existed between and thus outside of the biological social order'.¹⁸¹ The desire to not only work within but also crucially to *escape* binary gendered opposition opens up new possibilities for women. Woolf, for example, argues in 'A Room of One's Own' that androgyny, which she defines as writing without consciousness of sex, is fundamental to literary creativity — an occupation traditionally denied to women — and that it is 'fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly'.¹⁸² Writing at an earlier date than these feminist figures, Loy may be positioned as an important

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ See Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 134; Dorothy Richardson, *Revolving Lights* (London: Duckworth, 1923), p. 34.

¹⁸¹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'Discourses of Sexuality and Subjectivity: The New Woman, 1870–1936', in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 264–80 (p. 265).

¹⁸² Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 102.

precursor of this later twentieth-century feminist thought, and thus an intermediate figure between New Woman and modernist feminist intellectual currents.

One of Loy's contemporaries in England was working towards a strikingly similar concept of modern feminism. Dora Marsden (1882–1960) had commented extensively on *Sex and Character* in her weekly periodical the *Freewoman* (1911–1912), publishing translated excerpts during 1912. Marsden interpreted femaleness as a 'tendency of mind' towards impersonality that 'has no special kinship with the females of the human species': instead, it is 'the sin of the world' that 'men and women alike [...] have to overcome, or perish'.¹⁸³ Undermining Weininger's association of 'femaleness' with 'women', and asserting that it only referred to a loss of personality, Marsden declared that 'femaleness' is 'the Great Denial — the thing to be overcome' in both men and women.¹⁸⁴ Marsden even theorised an intermediate evolutionary ideal in her article 'Freewoman and Evolution' (1912): a concept of a future 'man-woman' that emerges through a process in which 'women acquire the mentality of men' and men 'understand [...] the intuitive faculties of women', resulting in a 'combination of forces such as we recognize in creative geniuses already'. The figure 'had nothing to do with sex', but was a model of modern womanhood that was not tied to traditional conceptions of femininity.¹⁸⁵ Marsden's vocabulary is comparable to Futurist writing in its eugenicist overtones: she writes that when 'the struggling spirit has burst through this bond we shall no longer be men, we shall be supermen'.¹⁸⁶ Although her radical feminism stopped short of suggesting surgical intervention for the creation of the future woman as Loy did, her vision of a

¹⁸³ Dora Marsden, 'Sex and Character', *The Freewoman*, vol. 2, no. 30 (13 June 1912), pp. 61–63 (p. 63). <<http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1302273887576379.pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Dora Marsden, 'Freewoman and Evolution', *The Freewoman*, vol. 1, no. 26 (16 May 1912), pp. 503–504 (p. 503). <<http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1302271837857629.pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 504.

degendered female superhuman indicates that strands of Italian Futurist writing were articulating similar ideas to those expressed in English modernist writing.

Loy's construction of a modern woman that is, for the most part, distinctly unfeminine thus constitutes an important aspect of broader early twentieth-century feminist aims; Futurist concepts of gender may also be understood to intersect to a significant extent with currents of Anglo-American modernism. But while the British female modernists' individualistic androgyny stands apart from socially effective feminist strategies, Loy's manifesto is conversely aimed, in written style at least, at a mass audience. Although her violent methods of achieving women's liberation are shocking and even authoritarian, her text is also a more socialistic and inclusive vision of feminism than those written by any of her peers. Her use of Futurist literary techniques and the manifesto form demonstrates that Futurism emerges as a textual space in which social ideas have the potential to be mobilised. Loy's experimentation with Futurism is thus another aspect of English modernist attempts to reassert the close relationship between art and life: her writing is socially engaged, and attempts to effect a radical transformation of society.

IV. Towards a Materialist Feminism

The Futurists display awareness in their writings that women become gendered through a socialisation process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behaviour: femininity is understood to be a cultural construct that has negatively impacted women's economic and social development. However, as Marinetti writes in 'Against Sentimentalised Love', this was not to argue that women

should, in their 'present state', be given equal treatment to men.¹⁸⁷ Loy subscribes to a similar view: 'Feminist Manifesto' asserts that equality will only emerge on the condition that women effect a radical transformation of their understanding of female selfhood, and destroy their attachment to traditional notions of femininity. But while the Futurists understood women as a product solely of socialisation, Loy differs slightly in that she also specifically locates women's oppression in their *material exploitation*. Her attention to the domestic lives of ordinary women in her early poetry is notable for its emphasis on the economics of marriage, the consequent emphasis on female bodily purity, and women's lack of agency in society: concerns that were also prevalent in New Woman writing. Thus, it is through an intersection between New Woman emphases on economic exploitation and Futurist thinking on the ideological basis of femininity that her thinking emerges. By viewing Loy's intellectual apparatus thus, it also becomes clear that her specific type of feminist thought is comparable to materialist feminism of the later twentieth century. This strand of feminism expresses, as Diane Griffin Crowder explains, the following conceptual logic:

Gender is not at all an arbitrary set of roles or expectations superimposed on biological sex. Rather, these roles and expectations follow logically and inevitably from material exploitation of the class 'women' by the class 'men.' That exploitation, and the material benefits men derive from it, determines both sex and gender, the former being used [...] as a convenient 'naturalizing' excuse for imposing the latter.¹⁸⁸

Loy's considers women's subjugation in modern society to be a result of their sexual and economic exploitation by men: that is, because biological sexuality is transformed into a product of human activity. This places her thinking on gender firmly in line with the theories of Rubin in 'Traffic in Women': the gendered body is created through the exchange of women in marriage, which, it seems logical to follow, can

¹⁸⁷ Marinetti, 'Against Sentimentalised Love', p. 56.

¹⁸⁸ Diane Griffin Crowder, 'Universalizing Materialist Lesbianism', in *Monique Wittig: Theoretical, Political and Literary Essays*, ed. by Namascar Shaktini (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 63–86 (p. 65).

only occur if the culturally constructed marker of purity — that is, virginity — exists to facilitate this transaction.¹⁸⁹ Loy's campaign to remove the material manifestation of virginity from women is undertaken with the view that it would negate women's transactional value, thereby destroying the kinship system. In fact, what Loy proposes in 'Feminist Manifesto' is to change the sexed body in order to prevent the gendering of the body, thereby producing a fundamental restructuring of the political and social order that will allow women to occupy a position that exists between and outside the gendered binary. Miller has argued that the destruction of virginity is only a satirical point in Loy's manifesto.¹⁹⁰ However, this seems unlikely in view of the excessive importance placed on virginity in the sex/gender system and the extent of Loy's desire to destroy this arrangement, as well as the bodily intervention advocated by Loy's original source: the anonymous female author of *Jungfräulichkeit?: Una poenitentium*. By advocating this radical measure, Loy differs from Rubin, who argued that it is 'cultural evolution' that will provide us 'with the opportunity to seize control of the means of sexuality, reproduction and socialization, and to make conscious decisions to liberate human sexual life from the archaic relationships which deform it'.¹⁹¹ Loy's manifesto does indicate that ideological change will occur as a result of a 'psychological upheaval', which presumably would be effected by the manifesto and materialise at the will of each individual woman.¹⁹² But it also argues for compulsory and invasive medical intervention in the body of every woman, whether they are disposed to the operation or not. It becomes a pressing question as to who, or what, would govern the surgical destruction of virginity, since any mandatory social imperative must be enforced by a dominant order.

¹⁸⁹ Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women', p. 35.

¹⁹⁰ Miller, *Cultures of Modernism*, p. 70.

¹⁹¹ Rubin, 'Traffic in Women', p. 52.

¹⁹² Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153.

Nevertheless, Loy's demands in 'Feminist Manifesto' do not only benefit women, because they can also reap rewards from the sex/gender system. She argues that the 'advantages of marriage are too ridiculously ample [...] for under modern conditions a woman can accept preposterously luxurious support from a man (without return of any sort—even offspring)—as a thank offering for her virginity'.¹⁹³ Men are also confined to limiting and damaging gender roles in modern society, because if women are construed as parasitical in this text, men are consequently 'the exploited'.¹⁹⁴ Rubin similarly argues that gender constructions are harmful for men, and writes that 'we should not aim for the elimination of men, but for the elimination of the social system which creates sexism and gender'.¹⁹⁵ Although Loy constructs women and men as 'enemies' whose interests only merge in the 'sexual embrace', this enmity is not a result of any essential, unbridgeable difference, but rather the predestined outcome of patriarchal power structures. Ultimately, Loy implies that feminist revolution would liberate not only women but also men, from what Rubin terms the 'straightjacket' of gender.¹⁹⁶

Loy's understanding of the power of gendered identity constructions to assert control over women also places her work in dialogue with Wittig's essay 'One is Not Born a Woman'. Wittig argues that 'sexuality is not for women an individual and subjective expression, but a social institution of violence', and that what constitutes a woman 'is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation that implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation'.¹⁹⁷ Her solution to this social reality is a refusal to 'become (or remain) heterosexual' through lesbian existence, and in doing so destroy 'the categories of

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁹⁵ Rubin, 'Traffic in Women', p. 54.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁹⁷ Wittig, 'One is Not Born a Woman', p. 19 and p. 20.

sex'.¹⁹⁸ While Loy does not consider homosexuality as an alternative to normative heterosexuality in her aim to combat the sex/gender system, her method — a refusal of the feminine — is distinctly similar to that of Wittig's in its aim to remove women from the very system by which the female subject is designated 'woman' economically, politically, and ideologically. Moreover, Wittig argues that what constitutes a lesbian is not sexual, but rather a political, social, economic, and symbolic action of refusing to participate in the myriad institutions that comprise heterosexuality and produce oppressive relations. By refusing to enter into the institution of marriage, and, crucially, by the refusal of the category of virgin through the destruction of its sign, Loy's superior women would, theoretically at least, be able to enact their own liberation from the sex/gender system. It is the creation of a feminist identity that is external to the heterosexual economy, and is therefore, to a certain extent, proto-queer.

Conclusion

Loy remained in Florence until 1916, after which she moved to New York, where her poems had already been published and had achieved some notoriety in literary circles for their explicitly sexual content.¹⁹⁹ By this time, Marinetti's branch of the Futurist group had temporarily abandoned their efforts to promote the movement in order to fight on the Italian front (Italy had joined the First World War in May 1915). The Florentine avant-garde, meanwhile, had repudiated Marinettian Futurism, and *Lacerba* closed with Italy's entry to the war. In 1914, Loy had declared her intention

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 13 and p. 20.

¹⁹⁹ The American Imagist poet Amy Lowell (1874–1925) refused to submit any of her poetry to *Others* (1915–1919) after Loy's 'Love Songs' had been published in the periodical in July 1915. See Suzanne Wintch Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 84–85.

to join the ‘Croce Rossa’ (the Italian Red Cross) in the event that Italy joined the war, and expressed support for Marinetti’s involvement in the interventionist cause.²⁰⁰ During 1915, she worked as a nurse in an Italian surgical hospital, writing to Van Vechten that she had volunteered after getting a very Futurist ‘war fever’, and entirely ‘on the chance of getting [to] hear a battlefield & getting to hear a lovely noise!’²⁰¹ Her enthusiasm for the Futurist aestheticisation of war sets her apart from Monro and Lewis, who largely distanced themselves from Futurism’s violent rhetoric. However, for Loy, the war presented an unprecedented opportunity for the modern woman to evince her more ‘masculine’ qualities in an environment ‘devoid of sentiment’.²⁰² Her experimentation with Futurism is conducted along markedly different lines to that of other English writers addressed in this thesis, but it reveals the heterogeneity of responses to Futurism in the early twentieth century.

Loy’s copy of the printed ‘Aphorisms on Futurism’, contained in the Beinecke archives, notably shows ‘Futurist’ and ‘Futurism’ crossed out and respectively replaced with ‘modernist’ and ‘modernism’.²⁰³ Conover has argued that these were made ‘after abandoning her Futurist allegiance’ and that Loy might have retrospectively wished to title the text ‘Aphorisms on Modernism’.²⁰⁴ Sandeep Parmar has written that the overwritten copy suggests ‘an innate difference between “Futurism” and “modernism”’, and although both terms have a ‘common investment in newness and progressive change’, the essential difference between the two ‘is that the latter provides an ongoing progression towards reworking language, meaning and

²⁰⁰ Loy to Dodge, [1914]. YUL, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Fol. 665.

²⁰¹ Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, [ca.1914]. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Carl Van Vechten Papers, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Fol. 1082. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3549085>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Mina Loy, ‘Aphorisms on Futurism’, January 1914. New Haven, Yale University Library (YUL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Digital Collections, Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Fol. 152. <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3547622>> [accessed 16 June 2019].

²⁰⁴ Roger Conover, Editor’s Note to ‘Aphorisms on Futurism’, in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. by Conover, pp. 215–16 (p. 215).

thereby society'.²⁰⁵ These analyses point to a rejection of the movement rather than an evolution within different strands of modernism: however, the annotations may equally indicate Loy's sense of the permeable borders between the two movements.

The conflation of Futurism with anti-feminism in Loy criticism has certainly tended to obscure the extent of Loy's use of Futurist strategies. Although Marinetti's criticism of 'woman' as a cultural construction and imaginary formation was largely intended to disrupt traditional literary subject matter, his analysis opened up possibilities for women writers to probe the ideological basis of femininity and its relationship to the sexed body. Loy's writings are notable for their emphasis on issues already raised by New Woman currents of the late nineteenth century, but she located women's oppression within cultural ideology rather than economic or legislative discrimination. Appropriating Futurism's provocative rhetoric and aligning her writing with a movement that aimed for the wholesale destruction of traditional institutions enabled Loy to articulate the necessity of demolishing damaging constructions of femininity and the complete obliteration of the sex/gender system through the destruction of virginity. The identification of the specific Havelock Ellis passage from which Loy derives her conceptual basis for the destruction of virginity confirms that her proposed method is medical intervention and not a metaphorical eradication: Loy's intention is thus to transform the sexed body to prevent the gendering of the female body, thereby freeing women from exploitative patriarchal structures and oppressive kinship systems. Loy's feminist thought is therefore to be placed in dialogue with the materialist feminism of Rubin and Wittig, whose writings identify the oppression of women as a result of the relationships that generate sex and gender.

²⁰⁵ Sandeep Parmar, *Reading Mina Loy's Autobiographies: Myth of the Modern Woman* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 28.

The Futurists' need to see a closer relationship between art and life emerge in the modern era is echoed by Loy. Specifically, this concerns a change in the representation of women in poetry: her own poetry foregrounds the lives of Italian women whose hopes for romance and marriage are almost always damaging, and in some cases even fatal. Loy does not romanticise the women of her poems, and implicitly rejects the cultural stereotypes of women depicted in nineteenth-century literature. Through 'Feminist Manifesto', Loy also demonstrates the need for literature to intervene in and change life: her writing constitutes a call to arms for a feminist renovation in consciousness. Through the intersection of New Woman discourses and Futurist discourses, Loy attempts to create and disseminate new theories of gender that are open and fluid. Loy is a feminist operating through Futurist ideology, and thus constructing an English inflection of Futurism that is fundamentally feminist. Her texts must be read through the lens of Futurism, and not in opposition to it.

Conclusion

The historiographical tendency to define the years between circa 1910 and 1914 as a moment of absolute and sweeping cultural change is a tenacious one in modernist studies. Michael H. Levenson's *Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) placed modernism's years in a rather narrow period between 1908 and 1922, with 1914 marking a dividing point between two distinct phases of modernism.¹ Jane Goldman's more recent *Modernism 1910–1945: Image to Apocalypse* (2004) similarly foregrounds 1910 as the beginning of a comprehensive cultural shift.² This is not to argue that critics have not identified earlier years as the foundation of modernism: Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's edited volume *Modernism: 1890–1930* (1976) and Peter Nicholls's *Modernisms* (1995) have both located modernism's roots in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the Symbolist and Decadent movements.³ But there is a curious staying power in the identification of 1910, or thereabouts, as an absolute beginning, which poses two critical problems in modernist studies. Firstly, by conceiving modernism's 'beginning' it follows that there is also a middle and an end: the years 1910 to 1914 become primarily significant for their role in the development towards a secondary stage of high modernism, the apotheosis of which is largely held to have occurred in 1922 with the publication of key texts such as T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. Levenson's aim was to analyse the structure of English modernism 'as it slowly assumed coherence', but in doing so he posited a teleological end to the

¹ Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

² Goldman, *Modernism, 1910–1945: Image to Apocalypse*.

³ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: 1890–1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

experimentation and development of the years between 1910 and 1914.⁴ Attributing such a coherence to modernism also tends to homogenise the various and multifaceted attitudes and ideas of the period, placing emphasis on movements such as Imagism and Vorticism, in which the leading protagonists were also frequently significant proponents of the later manifestations of modernism in the 1920s. It certainly eclipses the Georgian aesthetic of Harold Monro and the network of poets surrounding the *Poetry Review* and *Poetry and Drama*, who were nevertheless similarly attempting to recoup literature from a broken tradition in the same period, albeit with different methods and alternative priorities. The second problem with the identification of 1910 as a year of complete cultural rupture is that it contributes to a critical view in which modernism and the avant-garde materialise *ex nihilo*, obscuring their relations with movements that preceded them. Although significant differences between *fin-de-siècle* and twentieth-century literature unquestionably exist, and periodisation can provide a useful heuristic apparatus, such strict categories most often serve to obfuscate modes of continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is vital to understand these periods to be not in opposition to each other, but rather contiguous and even overlapping, because it is precisely at this border territory that our perceptions of modernism and its networks, connections, and manifestations may be transformed to become more nuanced and refined. In doing so, we become less in thrall to the pronouncements of the various individuals that had a vested interest in declaring their work to be unequivocally new in order to negotiate the demands of a competitive and complex cultural field.

Futurism is one significant point at which the intersections between nineteenth-century literature and modernism may be recognised, and this thesis has

⁴ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. vii.

demonstrated how heightened critical attention to its specific manifestations in English literature also elucidates the extent to which Aestheticism, Symbolism, and Decadence remained present in the years between 1909 and 1915. This leads to a better understanding of modernism in those years as fundamentally transitional in nature. Futurism's genealogy, as I indicate in my first chapter, originates from the Symbolist and Decadent movements of nineteenth-century France, which were the consecrated avant-garde during the period in which Futurism was formed. Establishing themselves against these movements, Futurism nevertheless interacted on a significant level with these earlier literary tendencies.

The specific intervention that my thesis has made in modernist literary criticism is to suggest that Futurism was a distinct phase of cultural experimentation within English modernism, which formed an important development in the transition between *fin-de-siècle* and modernist literature. Above all, this is manifested in Futurist attempts to transform the relationship between art and life. F. T. Marinetti aimed to overturn the sacralisation of art that had taken place in the nineteenth century and bring it into closer contact with life. Futurism aimed for a total vision of the world in which life would revolutionise the forms and attitudes of literature, and literature would play a significant part in transforming everyday life, stimulating a revolutionary zeal in its followers. But it is important to recognise that the division between art and life was also a major concern for English cultural figures before Futurism's formation and arrival in England. In this regard, Futurism must be understood to be interacting with a very relevant concern in England during the period. The English writers under investigation in my thesis all searched for methods of reintegrating art and life, and experimented with Futurist techniques in order to facilitate this aim. In this configuration, Futurism is less a movement to be officially

joined than a methodology or general approach to literature, in which the literary work may be recalibrated for the modern era. By positing Futurism in this way, I have countered claims that the movement had no impact on developments in English literature and offered a reassessment of the movement in England, which forces us to rethink the geographical and temporal parameters of English modernism.

My first chapter demonstrated how the Italian Futurists were preoccupied with creating transnational networks and extending their imagined community in the early twentieth century, despite their concurrent aim to promote the actions of the heroic individual. Although an Italian nationalist movement, Futurism was also fundamentally cosmopolitan in its tendencies, and sought to create an international cultural consciousness that was mediated through print networks. While these dual tendencies are usually conceived as a paradox in literary criticism, my work has clarified, using contemporary cosmopolitan theory, how the two ideologies may be inhabited simultaneously. Futurism's cosmopolitanism aims, which in fact build on their nationalist ideology, arose as a result of the intrinsically internationalised space of literary production in the early twentieth century. By examining Futurism through the critical lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural fields, I indicate how the movement grew out of French Symbolist and Decadent poetry but also positioned itself as a heretical challenger to these consecrated movements. While emerging predominantly in France, Futurism soon turned to England as a country that was a relatively marginal force in European culture before the First World War. I demonstrate how Futurism came to gain symbolic recognition in the English cultural field, and through a reappraisal of Futurism's reception in the English press between 1910 and 1914 I establish that English cultural figures were often receptive to the basic tenets of the movement because of their revitalising effect on culture. Futurist

discourses of vitality, action, and health posited a means of overcoming discourses of decline and degeneration that were prevalent in England during the pre-war years. The movement's broad aims of reconciling art and life were welcomed in England, where expressions of similar intentions for the future of literature were widespread.

My second chapter explored Monro's interactions with the Futurists and his publication of Futurist texts in his journal, *Poetry and Drama*. By focusing on this aspect of Italian Futurism's circulation in print culture in England, what clearly emerges is that Monro and *Poetry and Drama* become the voice of Futurism in England, precisely in a journal that was establishing the 'new' across a generation of aesthetes. Using the unpublished correspondence of Marinetti and Monro reveals the extent to which Monro was a significant figure in transnational Futurist networks. Monro was interested in Futurism because the movement signalled a return to life, particularly through its emphasis on a re-engagement with a mass public readership and Marinetti's interest in the oral performance of poetry. Many of Monro's ambitions for the future of poetry had been expressed in the *Poetry Review* before he formed a relationship with Marinetti. However, I also demonstrate the limits to which Monro was willing to follow Marinetti's specific brand of Futurism, showing how the Futurist poetics of words-in-freedom was a step too far for English cultural figures because of its threat to the autonomy of literature and the unique role of the poet. This does not indicate that Futurism was completely rejected after this point, however: Monro actively promoted Futurism even after he expressed a concern for its tenets in the December 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama*, positing the movement as a late-Symbolist phenomenon and a significant precursor to Imagism. In this regard, Monro's transmittance of Futurism to an English readership highlights the potential of the movement for English cultural practitioners, while also suggesting the need to

refine Futurist techniques. His reconfiguration of Futurism as a ‘tendency of mind’ rather than a specific Italian movement under the auspices of Marinetti works to redefine Futurism as a legitimate mode of experimentation for English writers.

In my chapter on Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism my aim was to bring the changing relationship between art and life to the forefront of investigation, by showing how Lewis negotiated both Aestheticist and Futurist currents during the formation of Vorticism. By demonstrating that Lewis, despite his pronouncements against Aestheticism, was actually connected via existing English cultural networks to Aestheticist figures I show that these cultural agents had an interest in guiding and promoting the new manifestation of English avant-garde culture. Lewis aimed to overturn Aestheticist values and was particularly opposed to a ‘feminised’ culture that he associated with Decadence. However, Futurism posed a threat to the English cultural hegemony that Lewis wished to promote, and also moved too far in the direction of a mimetic tendency in art. Re-evaluating key Vorticist texts has revealed the extent to which Aestheticist and Futurist tendencies are both at work in the movement, and specific attention to Lewis’s attempts to position Vorticism as part of an alternative Futurist tradition originating from the art of Leonardo Da Vinci demonstrates his position in an inherently Aestheticist lineage.

My final chapter explored the ways in which Mina Loy used Futurist ideas to transform *fin-de-siècle* New Woman discourses that were current in Florence during the pre-war years. As an expatriate female writer, Loy may perhaps be construed as the outlier in a study of otherwise male cultural figures operating in the London cultural field. However, she is no less representative of English modernist development, and her place in this thesis has been vital precisely because she illustrates the diverse aspects of Futurism’s influence on contemporary Anglophone

debates. I have demonstrated that Loy's feminist writings point to a reintegration of art and life through her aestheticisation of political, feminist activism. Loy used Futurist methods to develop New Woman ideas: although Futurism announced that it would embody a 'contempt for woman' in its first manifesto, the movement was often viewed as a liberating force for women as a result of the social and political ideas that it promoted.⁵ Most significant were Marinetti's assertions of 'woman' as imaginary formation, and his understanding of women's social inferiority as the product of centuries of marginalisation. Drawn to this ideology, which destabilised traditional categories of the masculine and the feminine, Loy argues in 'Feminist Manifesto' (1914) that women must challenge traditional values that culturally and socially constitute women as inferior beings, and she links the Futurist opposition to traditional sexual morality to a rhetorical construction of 'superior woman' to reverse the terms by which sexually liberated women are constructed as marginal, deviant subjects.⁶ But it is in particular Futurism's method of using language against its ideological grain that is employed in Loy's manifesto. Using the discursive space opened up by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century sexological discourses to argue against ideological constructions of womanhood, Loy reframes the parameters by which women are defined. In doing so, she not only works in a similar tradition to that of many later female modernists who used the language of sexology and psychoanalysis to question configurations of womanhood: in fact, her rhetorical refusal to become or stay 'feminine' also bears distinct similarities to Monique Wittig's aim to remove women from the very system by which the female subject is designated 'woman' economically, politically, and ideologically. It thus constitutes an act of refusal to participate in the myriad institutions that comprise

⁵ Marinetti, 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 51.

⁶ Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 155.

heterosexuality and generate oppressive relations of exploitation. By repudiating the institution of marriage, and particularly by destroying virginity through the obliteration of its sign, Loy's superior women are able to enact their own liberation from the sex/gender system, creating a form of female identity that is external to the heterosexual economy. My thesis thus contributes to existing modernist criticism on Loy, but it has also revealed the extent to which Loy's work must be situated within a much broader history of international feminist ideas and activism, stretching from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. This is a critical perspective that has not been given adequate consideration in scholarly work to date, and which my chapter has sought to address.

A more fluid and cosmopolitan conception of English literary modernism emerges through this thesis, which has demonstrated how English writers consciously negotiated and adapted Italian Futurist strategies to facilitate their own ambitions to subvert and develop *fin-de-siècle* culture, while also keeping Marinetti's culturally colonising grasp at a distance. This strand of early modernism is one in which the recovery of national culture, underscored by a masculine-gendered concept of vitality, is never far from sight. But it is also one that displays a remarkable permeability in terms of international construction, indicating that literary modernism, quite as much as the modernist visual arts, was open to cross-European influence. English inflections of Futurism traverse geographical and linguistic borders, challenging constructions of an Anglo-American modernism that is rooted in a solely English-language tradition. They also blur the division between the modernist and the avant-garde through their aims to promulgate an anti-institutional literature that aimed to revolutionise everyday life. By reassessing the significance of the Futurist movement in English literature it becomes possible to recognise Futurism as an important mode

of experimentation in early modernism. In doing so, this thesis has not only offered a new history of the movement in England, but has also presented an opportunity to reconceptualise modernism's historiography, its borders, and its limits.

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